

# AERIAL ODYSSEY

E. ALEXANDER POWELL



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# AERIAL ODYSSEY

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RED DRUMS

# *Aerial Odyssey*

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*CUBA, HAITI, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, PORTO RICO;  
VIRGIN ISLANDS, THE LESSER ANTILLES, TRINIDAD,  
THE GUIANAS, VENEZUELA, COLOMBIA, PANAMA,  
COSTA RICA, NICARAGUA, SALVADOR, HONDURAS,  
GUATEMALA AND MEXICO*

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By

E. ALEXANDER POWELL

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1936

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*To*

ROSAMOND AND HENRY WADSWORTH MOORE  
Real Friends



## FOREWORD

I FREELY admit that this book is superficial, thereby anticipating an obvious criticism. How could it be anything else in view of the circumstances under which the material was obtained? One can't visit two dozen countries in half that number of weeks, particularly when traveling by air, and get a very profound insight into their political, economic, and sociological conditions and their inhabitants' state of mind.

No doubt it will also be criticized as guidebookish. Perhaps it is. But I have found that people who are planning to go places and see things are usually more interested in how to reach those places and what to see in them than they are in an author's personal experiences and reactions.

Thanks to the kindness of officials of the State Department, of the Pan-American Union, of Pan-American Airways, and of the diplomatic representatives of the Caribbean republics in Washington. I met many influential and interesting persons in the countries which I visited and was afforded extraordinary opportunities for observation in the limited time at my command.

In this book I have sought to give an airplane-view, as it were, of all the republics and most of the colonies which fringe and dot the Caribbean, and I know of no



other single volume which embraces so many of them. Whether or not it has any merits, in gathering the material for it I had a perfectly grand time.

E. ALEXANDER POWELL

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# **AERIAL ODYSSEY**



# I

## SKY-ROAD TO ROMANCE

*"All aboard for Nuevitas, Cuba—Port-au-Prince, Haiti—San Pedro, Dominican Republic—San Juan, Porto Rico—St. Thomas, Virgin Islands—St. John, Antigua—Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe—Fort-de-France, Martinique—Port Castries, St. Lucia—Port of Spain, Trinidad, and points on the east coast of South America! Plane ready at Platform Number One! All-l-l aboar-r-r-r-d!"*

It was the loud-speaker at the International Airport outside Miami droning out its tri-weekly summons to romance.

The clipper which was to bear me southward, of greater dimensions than the flagship of Columbus on his first voyage to the New World, squatted at the water's edge, a huge silver gull with outspread wings. The passengers filed up the gangway and disappeared through the hatch; a gong clanged; the hum of the idling motors mounted to a deafening roar. . . . Waves slapped the hull, dashed against the windows, as the pontoons slithered through the choppy blue waters of Biscayne Bay. When well offshore the pilot swung the nose of the flying-boat into the wind, opened the throttle, and in a smother of spray we went tearing down the bay like an athlete gathering speed for a broad-jump. The

palms and gardens and villas and hotels along the waterfront sped past the windows crazily, like a motion-picture film which is run too fast. The floor of the cabin tilted slightly; there were a few final bumps as the pontoons skimmed the wave-crests—then all sense of motion ceased abruptly as we left the surface and started our climb into the blue.

Gaining altitude in a series of wide spirals, we headed south. The broad brown waffle of Miami, the narrow causeway leading to the Beach, the white houses peering from amid the foliage of Coconut Grove, the pink tiled roofs of Coral Gables and the campanile of the Biltmore dwindled to the proportions of those stucco relief maps displayed in the windows of realty agents.

Almost before we realized it, however, Miami had dropped from view. Now the fascinating panorama of the Florida littoral was unrolling itself below us at the rate of a hundred miles an hour. On one side of a broad ribbon of white sand lay a sea which ran through the whole gamut of blues from indigo to aquamarine; on the other a bright green ocean of tropical vegetation stretched to the horizon. Fringing the beach were cypress-covered keys; bungalows with snowy walls and roofs the color of dried rose-leaves huddled beneath the palms; houseboats and motor craft were anchored in the lapis lazuli lagoons. Some day, I thought, when I was old and tired of gadding, I would build myself a house on this enchanted coast—a little house with a deep, bougainvillea-festooned veranda looking out upon the unbelievable blue of the tropic sea, with crotons and hibiscus and oleanders beneath the windows and the

jungle, dark and mysterious, coming up to the back door.

Conversation being difficult in spite of the clipper's sound-proofed cabin—for no insulation can completely drown the roar of four 800-horsepower Wasps—the passengers settled back in their seats, gradually relaxed. Up forward the radio man, receivers clamped to his ears, was bent over his set. The trim young purser distributed packets of cotton-wool and chewing gum, magazines and *Miami Herald*s. I accepted the cotton for the sake of my ears, but, not being subject to air-sickness, I declined the gum.

Soon Florida disappeared below the horizon. In every direction, far as the eye could see, spread the bright blue of the Atlantic. Only occasionally was its monotony relieved by rusty cargo steamers or white-hulled yachts, which might have been motionless, so rapidly we overhauled and passed them, had it not been for the white V's in their wakes. Now and then we glimpsed schools of dolphins and flying-fish. But flying over great bodies of water quickly becomes tedious and boring. I decided that a steamer voyage would have been more diverting, for a steamer has a bar, and frequently a swimming pool, and a promenade deck. But there is this to be said for the plane: it annihilates time and distance.

I have done a good deal of traveling. But, after nearly twoscore years devoted to going places and seeing things, there remain on the map of the world quite a number of blank spaces—blank, at least, so far as my visual knowledge of them is concerned. The most conspicuous of these was, until quite recently, the Carib-



bean area. Being so close at hand—at our side-door, as it were—it lacked the lure of far-off places, and from year to year I had put off visiting it in favor of more distant regions. I know a man in Buffalo who has traveled almost everywhere, including Timbuktu and Tibet. Some day, he says, when he has seen all the other places, he is going to take a look at Niagara Falls.

I felt apologetic whenever the words "Caribbean Sea" stared up at me from the map, just as I feel apologetic whenever I see Dr. Eliot's "Five-Foot Shelf" of books. This is not saying that I had never set eyes on the Caribbean, for on numerous occasions I had crossed that expanse of cobalt en route from Cuba to Jamaica and the Canal and some of the Central American republics. But of most of the glamorous lands whose shores are washed by it my knowledge was only vicarious. It was embarrassing to have my friends say, "Is Trinidad a pleasant place in which to spend the winter?" or "How did you find political conditions in Santo Domingo?" or "Now, when you were in Honduras . . ." The time came when I felt that something should be done about it.

But to acquaint myself with the Caribbean countries, if only superficially, involved something more than the short and easy excursion I had anticipated, as I discovered upon consulting the map and the sailing-lists. For the Caribbean is a very sizable body of water. The voyager who heads due east from Puerto Barrios in Guatemala will have to traverse two thousand miles of blue water before he sights St. Lucia in the Windwards. Sprinkled over its surface are the thousands of islands, great and small, comprising the West Indian empires of

the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands; encircling it are eleven republics.

Though the Caribbean is crisscrossed by steamship routes, and though, in order to gratify the tourist's demand for novelty, cruise boats now touch at some of its most obscure ports, a comprehensive and continuous tour of the Caribbean countries by sea is next to impossible because of poor connections. The more I studied the sailing-lists, the greater became my discouragement. It seemed as though they had been worked out by some one with a positive genius for making the life of the traveler one long series of delays and vexations. I found that, in order to spend more than a few hours in certain places which interested me, I should have to wait a fortnight or three weeks for the next steamer. Between many neighboring ports, indeed, there is no communication whatsoever save by fishing boat or coasting schooner. For example, it is only about five hundred miles from Bluefields, the principal Caribbean port of Nicaragua, to Puerto Cortés, the chief east-coast port of the adjacent Republic of Honduras; but you will save time by going back to New Orleans, even though it means an additional fifteen hundred miles of travel. Or try to figure out a way of getting from Port-au-Prince to Dominica without returning to New York.

The sea-roads being impracticable because of the time involved, I considered the air-lanes. And here is what I found. By using Pan-American Airways I could visit twelve republics and eleven colonies, including the three Guianas, in sixteen days from Miami back to Miami, at a cost for transportation of about seven hundred and

fifty dollars. Needless to say, I did not propose to make the trip in such breathless fashion, nor should I advocate any one else doing so, unless, of course, one's idea of travel is to send postcards from a maximum number of places in a minimum of time. I found, moreover, that stop-overs would not entail exasperating waits, as is the case with steamers, for on all of the Caribbean air routes either tri-weekly or bi-weekly services are maintained.

Built for service not merely between cities, but between hemispheres, the largest of the clippers, whose four engines develop as much horsepower as the average locomotive, can carry forty-eight passengers plus five tons of mail and express.

No other transportation system in the world, unless it be the Overland Desert Mail in Arabia, carries so many picturesque and interesting types of passengers. Riding these aerial argosies are hard-bitten soldiers of fortune bound for the little wars and revolutions which are generally in progress in some portion of Latin America, colonial governors going out to their posts in the West Indies or the Guianas, sun-bronzed mining engineers on their way to the oil-fields of Venezuela and the emerald mines of Colombia, explorers and orchid-hunters on expeditions to the upper waters of the Orinoco or the Amazon, archaeologists destined for the Inca ruins in Peru or the Mayan ruins in Yucatan, rich Brazilians and Argentinians returning from New York and Paris to Rio and "B. A.," ambassadors for locomotives and mining machinery and cotton goods and firearms and whiskies headed for the great marts of the Antipodes, tourists

who have fled from the cold and snow of the North and are going down to meet the spring.

These same gigantic air-liners also transport mail and express to and from thirty-two countries and colonies: not only light and perishable articles, but virtually anything that would be sent by express in the United States. Ladies' dresses, hats, and lingerie are rushed south by air, so that the women of Caracas and Lima, of Rio and Buenos Aires, can obtain the latest fashions almost as soon as they appear in Paris and New York. A news reel taken in New York on a Saturday can be shown on the following Saturday evening in the cinemas of Montevideo, nearly eight thousand miles away. Gold, diamonds, emeralds, coffee, Panama hats, rare orchids, baby chicks and ducklings, alligators, monkeys, millinery, machine replacements weighing up to half a ton, are constantly transported along the skyways. The Phoenician galleys, with their cargoes of "ivory and apes and peacocks," had nothing on Pan-American's argosies of the air.

One of the minor inconveniences incident to an extended journey by air is the limitation which the capacity of the plane makes it necessary to place on the passenger's luggage. Thirty-three pounds is carried free on passages of under one thousand miles; forty-four pounds on passages of one thousand miles or over; while the passenger who holds a ticket calling for a passage of two thousand miles or over may take fifty-five pounds of impedimenta with him without charge.

For travel in the United States fifty-five pounds is an ample allowance, but to keep within it in preparing for a

trip on which you will encounter pretty much every variety of climate, from the torrid heat of the Guiana jungle to the cold of the Cordilleras, and on which you will require everything from riding garments to evening clothes, necessitates the selection of one's wardrobe with considerable care.

For travel in the hot countries I have found that there is nothing to equal Palm Beach cloth in the natural shade, for it is cooler than linen, it does not wrinkle, and it keeps its shape even after a native washerwoman has scrubbed and pounded it on a rock. For wear in the mountain capitals, such as Caracas, San José, and Guatemala City, where it is rarely uncomfortably hot during the day and where the evenings are quite chilly, you will need something warmer. I recommend a suit of blue or gray flannel. If you expect to do any riding—which you will if you visit the plantations or go into the bush—you had better take along a pair of jodhpurs and a jacket of some thorn-proof material with plenty of pockets. But for sheer comfort in a hot climate there is nothing like a pair of shorts. They may provoke comment in the Latin countries, but in the British possessions no one will give you a second glance.

The people of the Caribbean are the most hospitable folk on earth, but, when they invite you to dinner, they will expect you to show them the courtesy of coming in evening dress. In the cooler capitals a black dinner suit is *de rigueur*, but in the hot ones you will find a white dinner jacket more suitable than a black one. The British, of course, always dress for dinner, even on the remotest islands and plantations. It is a shibboleth with

them. "In this blasted climate," an English planter in the back-blocks of British Guiana remarked to me, "there is nothing like a stiff shirt to bolster up a drooping spirit."

Shoes are important, for the heat and the cobble-paved streets of the Caribbean cities are hell on the feet. Better take along four pairs: one of brown buck and one of white buck, both with crêpe-rubber soles; pumps for evening wear because of their coolness and lightness; and a pair of stout brown ankle-boots for riding and climbing.

The most practical topcoat is a camel's-hair, British warm. It will always serve in lieu of a blanket or a pillow, and you will find it very comforting when flying over mountains. And you will need a rain-coat that really sheds rain if you expect to be in the tropics during the rainy season. These last two garments will not be included in your luggage allowance if you carry them over your arm.

The above outfit, together with an adequate supply of shirts and underthings (for laundry is a serious problem when flying), should not exceed the free allowance of fifty-five pounds. But take more, by all means, if you want to and can afford it. You will find that excess luggage comes high, however—from Miami to Paramaribo, for example, about a dollar a pound.

Cigars and cigarettes are obtainable everywhere, and generally good ones. But, save in the British colonies, decent smoking tobacco is almost impossible to find, for the Latin-Americans are not pipe-smokers. In Caracas, after scouring the city, I finally discovered a tin

of Bull Durham, which sells for ten cents at home. The price—believe it or not—was a dollar and a half!

For most of the Caribbean countries a passport is essential, though visas are not required by all of them. Remember, moreover, that in all of the Latin-American republics, excepting Panama, you must have your passport stamped by the police before you will be permitted to leave. And don't fail to take along an ample supply of passport photographs. In some countries the police demand half a dozen of them. Though I have never been accused of being a revolutionist or a Red, my pictures must be on file in the rogues' galleries of nearly every country in the Caribbean.

Generally speaking, the traveler is put to a minimum of inconvenience by the authorities, but Venezuela is an exception. Entering Soviet Russia is a simple matter in comparison. In order to obtain admission to Venezuela the visitor must meet the requirements of (1) a consular visa, for which the fixed tariff is twenty dollars, though certain of the consuls charge as much more as the traffic will bear; (2) a small booklet known as a *cedula*, containing a description of the bearer and his full-face and profile photographs; (3) a health certificate; (4) a vaccination certificate; (5) a certificate of good character; (6) a police document equivalent to a French *permit de séjour*; and (7) a deposit of one thousand bolivars—which is not always returned. A famous American general omitted Venezuela from his itinerary rather than comply with these vexatious formalities. He remarked that it was easier to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

We had taken off from Miami at eight-thirty, and

about noon there appeared on the horizon a vague gray mass which I knew for Cuba. At precisely one o'clock, with the punctuality of the Twentieth Century Limited, we swept down to Nuevitas, on the north coast of Camagüey Province, a sun-bleached, dilapidated-looking little town of multi-colored houses rising in tiers above a blue bay of Ionian charm.

We remained at Nuevitas only long enough to take on fuel. Soon we were speeding over Oriente, the easternmost province of Cuba and the least developed. Shimmering heat-waves danced and flickered above a sea of tangled jungle from which rose the great purple peaks of the Central Range. That the passengers might obtain a better view of the tropical panorama the pilot brought the plane down until we were flying only a few hundred feet above the ground.

We caught glimpses of barrancas where a host of tropical plants fought for air and sunlight; of arroyos choked with palms; of treeless, grassy llanos across which scampered droves of wild cattle, ponies, and pigs, terrified by the sound and shadow of the plane. From the coastal marshes great flocks of flamingos rose in pink clouds to wheel away, flapping and skirling. On the sand-bars enormous sea-turtles sprawled in the sun. Crocodiles, awakened from their siestas, waddled off to plunge into the lagoons. Through waters tinted like a peacock's tail, "where the purple mullet and goldfish rove," we could see the coral sea-floor, where myriad forms of gracefully swaying aquatic vegetation formed a submarine fairy-land.

We passed above Gibara, its hinterland green with



banana and coconut plantation—the landlocked waters of Nipe Bay, blue as the inside of a Chinese bowl—the fantastic, anvil-shaped mountain known as the Yunque de Baracoa, and, just beyond, the little harbor where the anchors of Columbus rumbled down. Shortly we sighted the lighthouse on Cape Maisi, at the eastern extremity of the island. Then we were over the Windward Passage, long the hunting-ground of buccaneers and pirates, the storied sea-road to the Caribbean and the Spanish Main.

## II

### DARK DEMOCRACY

It is barely twoscore miles across the Windward Passage, so Cuba was scarcely out of sight before we described the great island which Columbus named Española, which the scholars at the Spanish court Latenized into Hispaniola, and which we call Haiti, although two-thirds of it belongs to the Dominican Republic.

It rose from the sea, a vague, mysterious mass swimming in a mulberry haze, and quickly grew into a tumbled confusion of sky-high mountains, the loftier peaks wreathed in ash-and-silver clouds. The tiny thatched villages huddled along the shore served to emphasize the vast proportions of the mountains which rose, range on range, behind them. It is said that Columbus, attempting to convey to Queen Isabella some idea of the island's chaotic contours, crumpled in his hand a piece of parchment. "It looks something like this, Your Majesty," said the great navigator. The story may be apocryphal, but it would be impossible to improve on the description.

Skirting a grim and rugged coast which had nothing in common with Cuba's smiling shore, we zoomed past headland after rocky headland as we entered the Bay of Gonaïves. Haiti, as you will see by glancing at the

map, resembles the head of some ferocious, snarling beast snapping at a morsel which represents the Island of Gonave, where a sergeant of American marines once ruled for a time as "king."

The sun was low in the crimsoning west and the plane cast a grotesquely elongated shadow on the placid surface of the bay before we sighted Port-au-Prince, seven hundred and fifty miles from Miami and the end of the first day's run.

The Haitian capital sprawls upon a gentle slope which rises gradually from the shores of a well protected bay to the foot of the semicircular mountain wall behind the city. The lower town, dominated by a cream-colored cathedral with twin towers, is laid out with a certain regularity, its white houses looking from the plane like cubes of sugar ranged upon a bright green cloth. Many of the houses are roofed with old-rose tiles, which are among the most beautiful of building materials, but the roofs of others are of corrugated zinc, which is one of the ugliest.

In spite of the increasing frequency with which cruise ships drop anchor in its harbor, Port-au-Prince does not go out of its way to cater to tourists. Consequently there is a gratifying absence of the voiciferous, insistent guides, touts, and hotel runners who pester the foreigner landing at most West Indian ports. Piloting the ramshackle taxis are Spanish-speaking mulattoes from Santo Domingo; the ancient victorias, drawn by emaciated, unkempt ponies, are driven by Haitian Negroes who butcher the French language as their great-great-grandfathers butchered the French planters. This city of 180,-

ooo people also has a street-car, its motive power supplied by an asthmatic engine taken from a Model T Ford.

Though there are a number of hotels, good, bad, and mediocre, the Splendide, a small and rather exclusive establishment in the residential section, is the only one which would receive a star of commendation from Herr Baedeker. Originally the residence of a wealthy native family, the windows of its high-ceilinged rooms look out upon a charming garden; meals are served on a terrace beneath gaily striped awnings; the cuisine is French and good. The Splendide is run by its owner, Mme. Fränkel, a strikingly handsome quadron who as "Miss Haiti" once won the grand prize in a Paris beauty contest. But no room will be available if she doesn't like your looks. "*Tout occupé! Je suis désolé, m'sieu'.*" But, should she take a fancy to you, she will probably invite you to have a champagne cocktail—which you will find charged on your bill.

Until Port-au-Prince was occupied by the American marines in 1915 it was one of the filthiest towns in the western hemisphere. Almost overnight it became one of the cleanest, for the leathernecks have a mania for water, scrubbing brushes, disinfectants, and whitewash. It is still characterized by the scrupulous sanitation and cleanliness which it enjoyed for nearly two decades under the American aegis—in which respect it presents a pleasing contrast to many of the Spanish-American cities—though, now that the Haitians have been left to paddle their own canoe, the permanence of these conditions is conjectural.

The official and social life of the Haitian capital focuses on the Champ de Mars, a broad expanse of sun-scorched turf, intersected by curving driveways and dotted with discouraged-looking palms. It was once shaded by stately trees and crowded with tropical shrubbery, but a former president, tired of being a target for disgruntled office-seekers concealed amid the foliage, ordered it cleared of all possible cover for assassins. But it is a rather pleasant place after nightfall, when a gentle breeze steals in from the bay, and the electric lights along the drives gleam like a diamond necklace on a dusky beauty, and there are concerts by the band of the Garde d'Haïti, and the lawns are thronged with laughing, chattering, white-clad strollers representing all shades of Haitian humanity from chocolate to weak tea.

Overlooking the Champ de Mars is the Maison Blanche, the residence of the chief of state, recently rebuilt to replace the presidential palace which was blown up during one of Haiti's numerous revolutions. A pretentious structure, dazzlingly white under the tropic sun, it is considerably larger and showier than the White House in Washington. At the head of the grand staircase, its rusty iron in striking contrast to the gleaming marble of the walls and balustrades, is the anchor of Columbus' flagship, the *Santa María*, which was wrecked off the north coast of the island in 1492.

Opposite the palace is a bronze statue purporting to represent Dessalines, the leader of the revolt which ended in the expulsion of the French and the author of countless unspeakable atrocities. It is said to have been bought

by the government of Haiti after its rejection by the South American country which ordered it, and the story seems to be verified by the fact that the figure wears the uniform and cocked hat generally associated with Bolívar. Certainly there is nothing in the features to suggest the Negro general who engineered the slaughter of the whites and reigned for two years as emperor of Haiti. But "Le Illustre Jean-Jacques Dessalines," as the statue is labeled, makes a satisfyingly heroic figure as he waves his sword defiantly in the direction of the building which until recently was the headquarters of the American marines.

From the Champ de Mars the rue Magny winds upward to the residential quarter, where the homes of the native aristocracy cling to the hillside, shut in behind high walls and all but hidden by the luxuriant vegetation. Most of the Europeans live in Pétionville, a charming suburb a mile or so beyond. Ten miles from the city and five thousand feet above it is another foreign colony, Keatkoff, which enjoys a superb view and a climate of eternal spring.

The houses of the well-to-do Haitians, loaded with towers and turrets and balconies and bay-windows, cluttered with columns and jig-saw decorations and excrescences of every kind, have been likened to French châteaux, but a much apter comparison would be to the architectural atrocities committed during our own General Grant period. Generally of wood, but sometimes of plastered brick, shabby and weather-beaten, their unkempt, weed-grown gardens sprinkled with mildewed statuary and rusty cast-iron fountains, they have an

atmosphere of decayed gentility which is very depressing.

But the eye is distracted from the unloveliness of the houses by the amazing wealth and variety of the tropical vegetation which embowers them. Almost every residence stands in what amounts to a miniature botanical garden, crowded with palms of many varieties, frangipani, oleanders, gardenias, hibiscus, poinsettia, crotons, and, most gorgeous of all tropical trees, flamboyants. Mangoes, breadfruit, oranges, lemons, red and yellow bananas, and the pear-shaped grapefruit of Haiti ripen within reach of the windows. The branches of the avocado trees droop beneath the weight of their dark green fruit. During a heavy wind there is always danger of being hit by a falling coconut. Masses of scarlet and crimson bougainvillea drip from the eaves and festoon the verandas. Over the crumbling walls climbing roses pour in cascades of fragrant color. The blinds of these Haitian mansions may hang askew, the front steps may sag, there may be chickens and even pigs in the dooryards, but ample compensation for these shortcomings is found in their enchanting gardens.

"Before you leave Haiti," the American Minister remarked one evening at dinner, "I should like you to meet the President. How about tomorrow morning? O.K.? Good! I'll have my secretary ring up the palace and arrange it."

It is easier to obtain an audience with the President of Haiti than with most American bank presidents. A secretary ushered us into a reception room which might have been in the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, and from behind

a broad desk rose to greet us a slender, grave-faced mulatto whose skin was no darker than that of many Italians. President Vincent is a lawyer by profession and was educated in France, I believe at the Sorbonne. Only after half an hour's conversation in my labored French did I discover, while groping for a phrase, that he had a very fair command of my own tongue. Cultured, courteous, well poised, suave, he makes as dignified a chief of state as you would find in any country. But I must confess that, from the picturesque point of view, President Vincent was a disappointment. Instead of the gold-laced coat, big gold epaulettes, cocked hat, and sword with which popular imagination invests a Haitian ruler, he wore a black coat and striped trousers.

Most Americans are inclined to speak of Haiti patronizingly, as of a backward and troublesome youngster, yet, as western nations go, it is not so young. How many are aware, I wonder, that it is, next to the United States, the oldest independent country in the western hemisphere, having declared its independence in 1804, when over every other foot of soil between our southern borders and Cape Horn flew the flag of Spain, Portugal, Britain, France, Holland, or Denmark. Though it is often asserted that the Negro is incapable of self-rule, the fact remains that the two million blacks of Haiti have succeeded in maintaining their independence for more than one hundred and thirty years, after having wrested it from Napoleon.

The history of Haiti began in December, 1492, when Columbus' little flagship, the *Santa María*, ran on a reef off what is now Cap-Haïtien. There, as the guest of a



Carib chief, the Discoverer spent his first Christmas in the New World, and there, before pushing westward, he build a fort and garrisoned it with forty of his men. Returning a year later, he found the fort in ashes, strewn with the skeletons of its garrison, and the former friendliness of the Caribs turned to hatred by the cruelties and outrages of the Spaniards.

The Carib aborigines were by no means the weak and docile race which we have been led to assume. They were, on the contrary, a cruel, ferocious, and warlike people and offered a determined resistance to the white man. Incidentally, they were cannibals, and it is to them that we owe that word, which is a corruption of "*Carí-bal*," the name Columbus gave them.

The Caribs were powerless to check the Spanish colonization of Hispaniola, which soon became one of the most flourishing of Spain's overseas possessions. But the remarkable prosperity of the colony, and its wealth of natural resources, soon aroused the avarice of a band of sea-rovers, English and French ruffians and rapscale lions expelled from St. Kitts, who had established themselves on the little coastwise island of Tortuga, which commands the Windward Passage. From here they raided the Spanish plantations on Hispaniola, carrying off crops and cattle for their own use for sale to ships putting in at Tortuga for provisions. The meat thus obtained was dried in smokehouses which the French called *boucans*, and from this the raiders came to be known as buccaneers.

The French buccaneers living on Tortuga eventually succeeded in establishing permanent settlements in His-

paniola. These became steadily larger and stronger until, in 1697, the Spaniards were driven from the western portion of the island, which, by the Treaty of Ryswick, was ceded to France and called Saint-Domingue.

The two million Carib aborigines had been all but exterminated by this time, and to replace them in working the land great numbers of Negro slaves were brought from West Africa, so that the end of the eighteenth century found Haiti divided into huge plantations, owned by a handful of Frenchmen but with the blacks composing more than ninety per cent of the population. Port-au-Prince was in those days but a miserable village, the colonial capital being Cap-Haïtien, on the north coast, which proudly called itself the Paris of the New World.

The overwhelming numerical superiority of the blacks kept the French in constant fear, and this fear manifested itself in the barbarous methods employed to punish Negroes who showed symptoms of disaffection or even insubordination. For comparatively trifling infractions of discipline slaves were burned in the public square of Cap-Haïtien, broken on the wheel, flogged to death, or most dreadful penalty of all, impaled on sharpened stakes. As a result of these brutalities there developed among the Negroes a smouldering hatred of their French masters which was to end in a wholesale massacre of the whites.

When the French Revolution broke out in 1789, Saint-Domingue was a flourishing colony, though not a contented one. Its population consisted of a small number of whites, a great number of blacks, and a considerable

number of freed slaves, mainly mulattoes, for every French planter had his dark-skinned mistress and some of them had whole seraglios of dusky concubines. To their mulatto offspring many of the whites gave not only freedom but an education. And therein they made their big mistake. For this middle class of intelligent and educated half-breeds constituted a far graver menace to French supremacy than the illiterate black plantation laborers. Reading the proclamation of the revolutionary government in Paris that all men had been created equal, the mulattoes quite logically applied it to themselves and on it based a demand that they be granted all the privileges of French citizens, which were granted to them in 1791 by the National Assembly.

But the politicians in Paris had not reckoned on the violent opposition this action would arouse among the French in Saint-Domingue. The newly adopted motto, "*Liberté, égalité, fraternité*," was doubtless applicable enough in France, where class distinctions had been done away with by the guillotine, but it was quite another matter to apply it on a remote island where men of African blood outnumbered the whites a hundred to one. So strong was the pressure brought to bear upon the home government by the planters that the decree was revoked, whereupon the mulattoes, infuriated at having their new-won liberties snatched away from them, instigated a general revolt among their half-brothers on the plantations. To make matters worse, the colony was invaded by a British expeditionary force, for the long struggle between England and France, which ended only with the downfall of Napoleon, had

begun. The French, now thoroughly alarmed, sought to enlist the aid of the blacks in the defence of the island by declaring the abolition of slavery. But the concession came too late. The ex-slaves, not content with freedom, demanded independence.

Fearful of losing the colony, Bonaparte, then First Consul, despatched to Saint-Domingue an army of veterans under the command of his brother-in-law, the handsome and dashing General Leclerc, who had married Pauline, Bonaparte's beautiful and amorous sister. The young general and his fascinating wife, accompanied by a glittering entourage, arrived at Cap-Haïtien to find virtually the whole colony under the control of the blacks, who were led by one of their own number, Pierre Domingue Breed, known to history as Toussaint Louverture.

This remarkable man, an educated Negro of extraordinary political and military genius, succeeded not only in restoring order but in driving out the British, General Maitland surrendering to him in 1798—the only instance, so far as I am aware, of a British commander-in-chief capitulating to a black one. The British invaders disposed of, Louverture proceeded to draw up a program for a constitutional government under the terms of which the colony was to be granted autonomy and he was to be governor-general for life. But his ability as a soldier and a statesman aroused the distrust of Bonaparte, who invited Louverture to France, ostensibly for a conference, offering him a safe-conduct. Hardly had the Negro leader set foot on the soil of France, however,

than, to Bonaparte's eternal discredit, he was arrested and died in a French prison.

He was succeeded by a leader of quite a different stamp. Jean-Jacques Dessalines, squat, ill-favored, illiterate and cruel, was fanatical in his hatred of the whites. The statesmanlike and farseeing Louverture had planned to conciliate the French; Dessalines determined to exterminate them. For the betrayal of his predecessor he took a terrible revenge, renewing the struggle with a sadistic ferocity unapproached in the previous conflict. Thousands of Frenchmen were slaughtered on their plantations; others, less fortunate, were subjected to the same dreadful tortures they had inflicted on their slaves. The army under Leclerc, decimated by disease and demoralized by debauchery, was unable to offer any effective resistance, and when Leclerc himself died of fever in 1803 Napoleon, now Emperor of the French, was only too glad to wash his hands of a bad job by abandoning the colony to the blacks. Early in the following year, Haiti, as the country was to be known thenceforth, declared its independence. To the Haitians the tricolor stood for white man, black man, and mulatto; so they ripped out the white, leaving the flag of blue and red which remains the national standard of Haiti. Shortly after the establishment of the new nation Dessalines proclaimed himself emperor; but his reign was of short duration, for his subjects, tiring of his tyranny and cruelty, assassinated him in 1806.

There now swaggers onto the blood-slippery stage of Haitian history one of the most fantastic and incredible figures of modern times. Jean-Christophe, a huge,

shambling, ignorant, superstitious black man, began life as a bar-boy in a Cap-Haïtien saloon, became a general in the war of liberation, and, seizing the reins of power upon the assassination of Dessalines, ruled Haiti for fourteen years as King Henry I, for his clumsy, untrained fingers could never master the chirography of his own name.

He made his wife a queen, his children "princes of the blood," and created a dusky nobility comprising eight dukes, twenty counts, thirty-seven barons, and eleven chevaliers. One of his nobles bore the appetizing title of "Duke of Marmalade," another "Count of Lemonade." Not so inappropriate as they sound, for oranges and lemons flourish on the island.

He surrounded himself with a court which might have stepped straight from a comic opera; maintained a well-drilled army of chocolate soldiers in resplendent uniforms; and was a close second to King Solomon in the number of his concubines. On the slopes behind Cap-Haïtien he built himself a palace, Sans Souci, far larger and more luxurious than the one of the same name at Potsdam. A few miles inland, on the summit of a lofty peak, he reared a mighty stronghold, a Gibraltar in the jungle, whose ruins remain one of the wonders of the western world. Running short of money, he ordered the peasants to turn into the national treasury the gourds which they use for drinking and cooking, just as President Roosevelt ordered the American people to turn in their gold. These he used as currency, which explains why the monetary unit of Haiti today is called the *gourde*.

Goaded into revolt by his bloodthirsty and tyrannical methods, his subjects finally rose against him, whereupon Christophe, rather than fall into their hands, shot himself in his burning palace with a silver bullet, for he had boasted that ordinary bullets could not harm him.

With the fall of Christophe, Haiti again adopted a republican form of government—republican at least in name. Administration followed administration in such rapid succession that the average Haitian seldom knew the current president's name. For nearly a hundred years those rulers who did not make their escape between two days died with their boots on. Between 1900 and 1915, for example, two Haitian presidents were overthrown and exiled; a third was blown up with the palace; a fourth was poisoned by his enemies; a fifth was banished; a sixth was chased out of the country and later shot. The seventh was an obstreperous gentleman named Guillaume Sam. When his enemies made an attempt to oust him he had the bad judgment to murder all the political prisoners confined in the prison in Port-au-Prince. The victims of this massacre numbered about one hundred and sixty, including many of Haiti's leading citizens. This was too much, even for a country which had been drenched in blood and was inured to horrors. An infuriated populace drove Sam from the palace, chased him through the streets and into the French legation, dragged him out and carved him into such small pieces that his remains had to be collected with a shovel.

The European ministers cabled to their home governments for protection, and a few days later a force of French bluejackets was landed at Cap-Haïtien while a

British cruiser was heading under forced draught for Port-au-Prince. At the same time the European powers bluntly notified Washington that, unless the American Government protected the European residents in Haiti, they would do so themselves. It was obvious that the United States had to do one of two things: either itself police the island or leave the Haitians to their fate. President Wilson solved the problem by ordering a brigade of marines to Haiti. A few days later the Navy Department received the stereotyped and reassuring report: "The marines have landed and the situation is well in hand."

When our sea-soldiers landed in '15, Haiti was a synonym for misgovernment, disorder, and political corruption. Bands of *cacos* roamed the country, killing, plundering, and burning. No one's life or property was safe. Assassination was a recognized political weapon and one frequently employed. The national finances were in a state of chaos. The bandits and the tax-gatherers between them had left the peasantry almost destitute.

This intolerable state of affairs was brought to an end by the marines. They smashed the *caco* bands which had been carrying on a reign of terror in the hills, and in some instances executed their leaders. They established a gendarmerie, recruited from natives and in some cases officered by them, which soon made the rural districts of Haiti as safe as those of New England. They revamped the judiciary and saw to it that it dealt out even-handed justice—something with which the Haitians had not had so much as a bowing acquaintance thereto-



fore. They repaved the abominable streets in the towns and transformed into motor roads the miserable cart-tracks which served the interior; they extended and modernized the telegraph and telephone lines; they established hospitals and dispensaries; they provided even the smaller communities with decent water supply and sanitary systems. The virulent tropical diseases to which the island was subject were virtually eradicated. In short, they cleaned up the country, physically, politically, and morally, and put into the hearts of a backward and semi-barbarous people a wholesome respect for God, the Law, Uncle Sam, and the United States Marines.

For this work of rehabilitation the men in the khaki uniforms were violently and unjustly denounced by radical journalists, professional pacifists, Communists, political obstructionists, muck-raking magazine writers, parlor pinks. It was asserted, and with some degree of truth, that they had been guilty of brutality—but you can't suppress banditry by a slap on the wrist and a "Tut-tut!" They were assailed for having drawn the color-line, which in their social relations with the natives they unquestionably did—but the critics chose to ignore the fact that it is drawn by the Haitians themselves. "It was your marines," an educated mulatto said to me in Port-au-Prince, "who saved us from being ruled by the blacks."

When the marines were withdrawn in 1934 the Washington Government was fulfilling, if somewhat prematurely, a solemn pledge. But the country which we handed back to the Haitians was vastly cleaner and more decent than the one which we occupied. No one

familiar with the conditions which existed in Haiti before the occupation, or with the Haitian character, believes that our withdrawal was for the natives' own best good. But, though the material and moral benefits of the occupation were acknowledged by every one save the corrupt politicians, the bandits, and certain Americans who are chronic kickers, the mere presence of our troops, however exemplary and unobtrusive their behavior, was a standing affront to Haitian self-respect.

"Most peoples," once remarked an English statesman—Campbell-Bannerman, I think—"would rather be self-governed than well governed."

### III

## GIBRALTAR IN THE JUNGLE

GIVEN an honest and able government, there is no reason why Haiti should not enjoy great prosperity, for it is not excelled by any other country in the world in the wealth and variety of its vegetable products. It has vast hardwood forests; all tropical plants and trees grow there to perfection, and in the highlands can be raised nearly all the fruits and vegetables of the temperate zone.

Barring the lack of good hotels, as a winter resort it could hardly be improved on, for its mountains, averaging four thousand feet in height but frequently rising to much greater altitudes, give it a variety of climate wide enough to suit every one save those who are looking for skating and skiing. Living is extraordinarily cheap; there is fine sea bathing and big-game fishing; and—though this may not be a recommendation to some—there is always the feeling that something is about to happen.

Until the coming of the American marines the only way to travel in the hinterland was afoot or astride a pony, for the cart-tracks of the rural districts were roads in little more than name. Now, however, the towns of the interior have been made accessible by a tolerably good highway system. You can drive without undue dis-

comfort from Port-au-Prince to Cap-Haïtien, on the north coast, or to Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic.

Because of the propensity mountains have for stealing the rain, Haiti has numerous verdant valleys down which meander pleasant streams, though here and there are considerable areas of waterless desert where nothing can be grown. Scattered over the back-country are sugar, coffee, banana, and tobacco plantations. The towns of the interior, though not particularly interesting, are colorful and generally clean. But when you have seen one you have seen them all, for they are of the same pattern—one-story cobbled houses giving on cobbled streets, a *mairie*, a gendarmerie barracks, a market, and an unkempt common, invariably called the Place de la République. In the center of each *place* stands a stately royal palm, the national emblem, its trunk painted in bands of red and blue, the Haitian colors, so that it is, in effect, a living coat-of-arms.

The village market, always animated and picturesque, is the hub of local life. Against the sun the venders rear shelters of straw matting, like the sails of Chinese river craft, and in the shade display their wares—earthenware utensils, palm-leaf brooms, homemade straw hats, piles of golden oranges, red and yellow bananas, mangoes, and countless varieties of stranger fruits. Presiding over each little mart is a strapping Negro woman in a single garment of gaudily figured cotton print, a bandana twisted turban-fashion about her head, usually smoking a long black cigar.

Hard by every town, however small, is a sun-scorched,

weed-grown cemetery, crowded with mounds of plastered brick all coated with the prevailing whitewash. The more pretentious tombs are usually covered with rude roofs of boards or thatch, presumably to keep the sun and rain from annoying the departed. Amid the graves gleam candles, placed there by relatives of the deceased, and frequently there are bunches of colored rags, tied to sticks, to ward off evil spirits. In or near the cemetery is generally a small shrine with a crudely painted picture of Christ or the Virgin—always chocolate-colored—and pitiful little votive offerings; trinkets, food, or small bottles of the native rum called *tafia*. On most of the tombs are painted crosses, but not infrequently the Christian emblem is supplemented by serpent designs, these being the only evidences of voodooism which I saw in Haiti.

In spite of the vigorous efforts of the Americans and the half-hearted efforts of the government to stamp it out, voodooism is still widely practiced in Haiti. That chickens and goats, and more rarely young bulls, are sacrificed to the serpent-god is a matter of common knowledge, and it is possible that even children and young maidens have been victims of the unclean cult. The blacks of Haiti, beneath a thin veneer of Roman Catholicism, are firm believers in sorcery, witchcraft, and jujuism, and I doubt not that in the fastnesses of their hills as strange things happen as in the African bush—but they are not for the eyes of the white man.

It is a simple matter to see one of the dances known as *bambache*—any European resident can arrange through his house-servants for the staging of one—but

they have no more religious significance than one of our "dance marathons." The drums which of nights thunder in the hills do not signify that a voodoo ritual is in progress, as the credulous visitor likes to believe, generally being indicative of nothing more sinister than a Negro merrymaking. In almost any village there will be pointed out to you old men who are reputed to be *papalois*, or voodoo priests, and wrinkled hags who are said to be *mamalois*; but, even if you have a sufficient mastery of the local patois known as Creole to talk with them, they rarely can be induced to discuss voodooism. This is partly because the practice of the cult is a felony in Haiti, partly because of the inherent secretiveness of the African in matters touching on his tribal religion.

I very strongly doubt whether any white man, past or present, has been permitted to witness, or has succeeded in witnessing surreptitiously, the inner mysteries of voodooism. This was the opinion of every European resident with whom I discussed the subject. The "eye-witness" accounts of voodoo ceremonies which create momentary sensations when published in the United States are regarded by the whites living in Haiti with amusement and open skepticism.

I realize that to readers avid for sensation these comments on voodooism will be disappointing. Had I seen in Haiti what certain other writers claim to have seen, this chapter would be vastly more entertaining. But, even at the risk of being matter-of-fact and prosaic, it is better to describe things just as you find them.

It is hard to understand why the cruise boats which poke their prows into the most out-of-the-way corners

of the West Indies omit from their itineraries Cap-Haïtien, for it is by long odds the most historic and interesting spot on the island. By road it is one hundred and eighty miles from Port-au-Prince to "the Cape," and the trip can be made by motor car in about seven hours, provided the roads have not been washed out by the rains. It was my great good fortune, however, to escape that tedious journey, for, thanks to friends in the administration, I was borne across the island in fifty minutes in a pursuit plane.

In order to avoid the clouds which wreath the higher peaks, and which make flying extremely hazardous when they spread in a fleecy canopy over the entire land, as is usually the case in the afternoon, we crossed the two tremendous ranges enclosing the great central valley at a height of nearly twenty thousand feet. At that altitude the cold was piercing, and in spite of the warm flying-jacket which had been loaned me and the straps of the parachute harness I was chilled to the bone. From the ocean of fleecy clouds below us I derived a certain comfort, however, for they concealed the maelstrom of mountains which lay beneath them. Not so reassuring was the warning on a small plate attached to the fuselage: "*Should the pilot be injured during a forced landing the passenger will make no signals to rescuing plane.*" Though unable to figure out its meaning, I found it distinctly ominous in its implication. Scarcely less ominous was the warning given me by the commander of the air-field in Port-au-Prince as we were about to take off. "If you *do* have to bail out," he said,

"be sure and count three slowly before you pull the rip-cord."

I have no idea how the pilot knew where we were, for of the earth nothing could be seen, but, after we had been flying about forty minutes, he shut off the power and we went swooping into the fog-bank, the wind shrieking through the struts and guy-wires in an eerie song. So dense was the fog that I could scarcely see the pilot, though his back was within reach of my hand. I hurled a shouted question at him, but my voice was drowned by the wind. I felt singularly alone. Then I noticed for the first time, attached to the fuselage, a perforated metal receptacle about the size of a shoe-box. I tentatively thrust a forefinger through one of the holes and received a sharp peck from a carrier pigeon. Under the circumstances even the companionship of a bird was comforting.

We went through that cloud-bank as a circus-rider goes through a paper hoop, emerging from its dank brume into blinding sunlight. A few miles to the north stretched the Haitian coast line, the combers from the Atlantic breaking in snowy ostrich feathers on beaches fringed with palms. Directly beneath us yawned a mountain valley—perhaps gorge would be a more accurate description—hemmed in by precipitous walls of rock and choked with tropical vegetation. From the jungle-covered floor of the valley rose an isolated crag which reared itself skyward to a height of perhaps four thousand feet—though that is a guess—like a pointed mould of mint jelly in a deep green bowl. And perched on the very summit of the crag, between jungle and sky, was a



fort. It lay spread below us, its ramparts and bastions and embrasures as clearly outlined as a plan on an engineer's blueprint. The pilot scribbled a couple of words on a scrap of paper and passed it back to me. "Christophe's citadel," the laconic message read. A good many people have seen and marveled at the amazing stronghold reared by the Negro despot on a mountain-top, but very few have had the good fortune to see it under such dramatic circumstances as I did.

The motor abruptly resumed its rhythmic roar, and we volplaned toward the fort as a hawk pounces on a chicken-coop. Six times we circled the citadel, so close that the tip of the plane's inner wing appeared to all but graze the ramparts. By leaning from the cockpit I could almost, or so it seemed, have plucked the wild oranges growing in the crevices of the rocks. Have you ever seen a woman's hatbox with a truncated cardboard cone in the center to hold the hat? Yes? Well, Christophe's citadel is like that, and flying around it was like flying round and round the inside of a titanic hatbox. At length, when I was growing giddy from the constantly changing angles at which the fort appeared, now below us, now above us, we shot out of the gorge like a bat out of hell and, straightening out, went zooming down to the coast and Cap-Haïtien.

Set on the shores of a bright blue bay opening on the Atlantic, Cap-Haïtien is the second largest city in the republic and was the capital in colonial times. As a result of nearly two decades of cleanliness enforced by the American marines the town is spick-and-span, but it contains few relics of its glamorous and hectic past, for most of

the buildings of the colonial era were destroyed when the place was burned by the blacks under Dessalines. At the distance of an hour's walk along the coast is the spot, marked by a monument, where Columbus landed from his wrecked flagship. On the seaward side of the town, overlooking the bay, is the site of the palace where Napoleon's sister, Pauline, held her miniature court; but the palace itself is in ruins and its gardens are a tangle of tropical vegetation.

If you have sufficient imagination, however, perhaps you can capture something of their former atmosphere by strolling in them under the tropic moon. Maybe you will see, in your mind's eye, the beautiful and provocative Pauline with her scarlet lips and gardenia skin, her frizzled hair coifed high on her little head, her lovely body outlined beneath the diaphanous, high-waisted gown. Perhaps you will see her bevy of dashing lovers, in their glittering Napoleonic uniforms, and you may even glimpse, in the background, her husband, General Leclerc, anxious, emaciated, flushed with the fever which was to carry him off and leave his wife free to become a queen.

It is a drive of about an hour from Cap-Haïtien to Millot, the tiny hamlet which is of importance only because of its immediate proximity to Sans Souci, the ruined palace of Christophe. The narrow, dusty road, bordered for the most part by dense bush but with occasional small clearings, was once the "royal highway" between Sans Souci and the Cape, and in the days of the black monarch's glory was as wide as the widest boulevards of Europe. Along it at infrequent intervals are clusters of

miserable thatched huts, like groups of ragged peasants waiting by the roadside for a royal procession to pass.

In the distance there rose above the intervening sea of jungle a range of lofty, forest-covered mountains, shading upward from green to amethyst. One of the higher peaks was distinguished by a singular square-cut summit which looked as though it had been fashioned with a titanic hack-saw. Though I had seen it only a few hours before from the plane, it was hard to believe that that distant, isolated summit had been shaped by human hands, that it was the storied stronghold of Christophe. Miles and miles from anywhere, with the dark jungle all around, its mystery and majesty were heightened by its solitude. Its stupendous battlements outlined against the sky in ominous silhouette, it was too fantastic to be real.\*

Millot consists of a score or so of squalid dwellings clustered around the whitewashed and neatly kept gendarmerie barracks. The troopers, trim, soldierly fellows in smart khaki uniforms, could not have been distinguished from the American marines who trained them had it not been for their helmets and the color of their skins.

Just beyond the town, on the mountain slope, stands the Palace of Sans Souci, or what remains of it, solitary and imposing. Mammoth gateposts, twenty feet in height, guard the entrance to a cobbled, grass-grown courtyard spacious enough for a squadron of cavalry to maneuver in. At the left of the entrance a circular chapel was being restored by a gang of blacks under the super-

\* See the same author's *Red Drums*.

vision of a Negro in a khaki uniform who said that he was a government architect. It didn't strike me that he was very familiar with his profession, however, for the wooden framework which had been built to support the dome was at least eighteen inches out of line, and so flimsily constructed that it threatened at any moment to collapse.

Though fallen into decay and wholly uninhabitable, enough of Sans Souci still stands to bring exclamations of amazement and admiration from the most sophisticated traveler. And such enthusiasm is justified, for it was once one of the most pretentious structures in the New World. Originally five stories in height, with vast, magnificently furnished state apartments and accommodations for hundreds and hundreds of officials, courtiers, concubines, servants, and soldiers, the architecture of this tropical Versailles, in spite of its dilapidated condition, remains tremendously impressive.

From the great courtyard broad flights of steps curve upward to a series of terraces, whose crumbling columns and broken arches frame enchanting views of mountain, forest, plain, and sea. But the roof and most of the floors have given way, leaving a labyrinth of empty, echoing chambers and corridors open to the sky. Creepers and wild oranges sprout from the débris of past grandeur; snakes glide from crevices in the sunken marble floors; about the roofless rooms flap myriads of bats. In the gardens at the back of the palace still stands the huge ceiba beneath which the Negro tyrant granted audiences and dispensed his peculiar form of justice. But, of the countless marble statues which once lined the prom-

enades, the only one remaining is that of Christophe's favorite concubine. The secret underground passage which he is known to have built between the palace and the citadel—an emergency exit in case of revolution—has never been found. Upon its completion Christophe is said to have murdered the laborers who built it, and its secret presumably perished with them.

The military authorities in Port-au-Prince had notified the lieutenant commanding the gendarmerie post at Milot of my coming and had instructed him to have ponies available for the trip to the citadel, a long and arduous climb. The ponies were tough, wiry little beasts, not much larger than Shetlands, so that our feet almost touched the ground; the native saddles might have been designed by the torturers of the Spanish Inquisition.

We plunged into a forest of great sablier trees, and both the palace and the fortress were almost immediately lost. Presently the trail began to climb. In places it was so narrow, the stones so slippery, that we deemed it wise to dismount. For had a pony lost its footing on that slender path, often but a cornice cut from the rock, animal and rider would have been plunged into a thousand feet of emptiness. Now and then, through breaks in the vegetation, we could see, high above us, the mighty stronghold which was our goal. Poised miraculously between land and sky, it suggested the lair of some dreadful mythical monster, the abode of an ogre out of a child's storybook.

After nearly three hours of alternate riding and scrambling, in an atmosphere as hot and humid as that of a Turkish bath, we abruptly emerged from a forest

of giant grasses to find the citadel looming immediately above us. In general form the castle is rectangular, its immensely high walls rising smooth and sheer, though, in order to conform to the vagaries of the terrain, one huge, wedge-shaped bastion juts outward like the prow of a battleship. Seen from close range the stupendous structure was even more sinister and forbidding than when viewed from below. It had the grim mystery of the monasteries at Lhasa, of the temples of Thebes, of the *kasbahs* which crown the peaks of the High Atlas.

Leaving our panting ponies in charge of the native lads who had accompanied us, we plodded up the last and steepest quarter-mile to a small shelf of level ground, a sort of terrace bordered on three sides by precipices. On the fourth side the mighty walls began, rearing themselves skyward from the summit of the mountain, so that the work of nature was continued by the hand of man.

Massive, iron-studded doors, standing ajar, revealed a doorway as black as the entrance to an Egyptian tomb. Leaving the sunlight behind, we passed into the darkness and silence of what had once been the castle's guardroom. It was like entering the gates of death. The room was damp and musty, heavy with the smell of decay, the foul odor of bats.

Our torches revealed a chamber vast and vaulted, evidently the lowermost story of the fortress, for its floor was hewn from the solid rock. A dank staircase mounted to an upper level. Ascending it we found ourselves in a long gallery or casemate. Its outer wall was pierced by a row of ports behind which squatted enormous, anti-

quated cannon, their muzzles commanding the encircling jungle, the slopes of the adjacent mountains and the trail by which we had come. Many of the mahogany gun-carriages had rotted and collapsed, leaving the ponderous barrels tilted drunkenly. On some of them were still discernible beneath the rust the arms of England, France, or Spain.

We mounted steadily by a series of narrow stairways, the ancient bricks crumbling beneath our feet. We passed through casemate after casemate lined with cannon, scores and hundreds of them, of all sizes and types. The floors were littered with rusty cannon balls in pyramids or disordered heaps. The wonder of it was that, without machinery, with no power save human sinews, these mammoth pieces of ordnance could have been hauled up the steep and narrow trail which is the only approach to the fortress. Perhaps there is some foundation for the story that, whenever the laborers lagged at their superhuman task, Christophe ordered one of them to be killed. There is no spur as sharp as fear.

At length we glimpsed above us a patch of turquoise sky. We caught the pleasant scent of wild orange trees, the freshness of great heights. Presently we emerged from a sort of hatch into a great court, an open plaza, at the very summit of the citadel. A parapeted plateau overhanging a dizzy gorge, it had been in former times the parade-ground of the garrison. Tropical shrubs and creepers, even trees, had found foothold in the crevices of the parapet, forming along the edges of the enclosure a fringe of vegetation. Cautiously crawling forward, I

peered over the brink into the abyss below. It was like looking over the edge of a structure twice the height of the Empire State Building.

In the center of the plaza stood a squat rectangle of plastered brick or stone. "That," said my companion, "is Christophe's tomb." Here on the great fortress which he had reared, high above the land which he had ruled, within sight of the city which had been his capital, there was a singular appropriateness in the burial place of the black king who had shot himself when he realized that his despotic reign was at an end.

It is not surprising that countless tales, most of them apocryphal, should have as their central figure the Negro monarch. There is probably no truth in the story that, wishing to impress a foreign diplomat with the iron discipline of his household troops, Christophe staged a review on the citadel's precipice-bordered parade-ground and, by way of concluding the exhibition, marched an entire company over the edge of the cliff. It is quite in keeping with his sadistic character, however, that, upon the completion of the fortress, he should have had the architect hurled from the parapet lest he reveal the secrets of its defences.

This untutored Negro who climbed from a barroom to a throne on the bayonets of his followers was a singular combination of a clown and a monster. But that he possessed many of the qualities requisite for ruling a turbulent and savage people cannot be denied. After all, he was King of Haiti longer than Napoleon was Emperor of the French.



## IV

### LAND WHERE THE CHOCOLATE TREE GROWS

IF Mr. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., would provide the funds for the restoration of Santo Domingo, as he financed the restoration of Williamsburg, Virginia, he would place in his debt all the peoples of the western hemisphere, for on the site of what is now the capital of the Dominican Republic began the colonization of the New World.

Founded in 1496, at the command of Christopher Columbus, by his brother Bartholomew, Santo Domingo is the oldest settlement of white men in the Americas and perhaps the most perfect existing example of a sixteenth century Spanish colonial town. Here, at the mouth of the Ozama, is the tree to which the Discoverer moored his flagship. Here is the harbor from which he and Cortez and Pizarro and Velasquez and Ponce de Leon and many another passed out to write their names imperishably on the scroll of fame. Here are the remains of the little chapel which Columbus built and in which he worshiped. Here is the tower in which he was confined in chains. Here is the palace where his son, Diego, ruled as viceroy. Here is the ancient cathedral in which rest, in all probability, the Navigator's bones.

Could this obscure West Indian town be restored to its aspect of four hundred years ago, the opening chapter in the history of this hemisphere would be provided with a living illustration. So small is the whole historic area, so comparatively little is there to be done, that a mere fraction of the amount already spent at Williamsburg would cover the entire cost of rehabilitation. The astonishing thing is that it has not long since been done.

Although Santo Domingo is on the coast, with a small but sheltered harbor, the Pan-American planes from Port-au-Prince do not land here, but at San Pedro de Macoris, fifty miles beyond. Though for the passengers this entails a certain amount of inconvenience, the drive from San Pedro to the capital affords some compensation, for the coastal lagoons are alive with wild fowl, great herds of goats find pasturage on the savannahs, the tall chimneys of sugar *centrales* rise above vast plantations of bright green cane, along the dusty road plod lumbering oxcarts and strings of burros and peasants in white cotton garments and enormous straw hats and horsemen who might have ridden out of a sketch by Frederic Remington.

Santo Domingo is a vastly more interesting place than Port-au-Prince in spite of the fact that its situation cannot compare with that of the Haitian capital and that it has only about a sixth of the latter's population. For the metropolis of the Negro republic is a parvenu compared with this little Dominican town, which was already a flourishing capital when our oldest city, St. Augustine, was founded, and had been in existence for nearly a century and a quarter when the Pilgrims set foot on Ply-

mouth Rock. Its ancient buildings, considering the way they have been neglected, remain in a remarkable state of preservation; many of the bastioned walls and city gates built more than four hundred years ago by Diego Columbus still stand.

The modern city, at a little distance from the river and on higher ground than the original one, is built about a spacious square, the Plaza de la Independencia, with the inevitable band-stand. Here a military band plays on Sunday evenings and concentric circles of young folk, one of girls, the other of men, move slowly round and round in opposite directions. Reminiscent of Havana are the straight and narrow streets, with awnings of weather-beaten canvas stretched across them against the tropic sun. The sidewalks, no wider than a breadth of carpet, are reminders of the days when the only vehicles to thread the streets were the high, two-wheeled *volantes* of rich planters, the near horses ridden by postillions, and when merchandise was carried on the backs of slaves instead of in motor trucks.

The older houses are massively built of stone, though frequently plastered over and whitewashed, with ponderous brass-studded doors of native mahogany and broad, low windows, often framed by borders of old Spanish tiles and always protected by grills of wrought iron. Though the houses turn toward the street countenances somber and uninviting, through their doorways one may catch fascinating glimpses of patios gay with tiles and flowers, of little fountains playing in the sun. Parading the narrow footways or lounging in the open-front cafés are swarthy, romantic-looking men in

white linen who might be either barbers or conspirators and quite probably are both. Smiling down from the balconies are olive-skinned girls with come-hither eyes and hair that is blacker than black and lips the color of a poinsettia. One wonders why about a woman leaning from a balcony there is something so provocative and intriguing.

On the banks of the Ozama, amid the hurly-burly of the waterfront, is the older town, containing most of the buildings dating from Columbus' time. Beside the river, flanked by wharves and warehouses, stands the trunk of the venerable ceiba to which he made fast his hawser—or, rather, what remains of the tree, for so many attempts have been made to preserve it that it is now little more than a shell filled with cement. Behind it, on a height commanding the river, is the palace of the Spanish viceroys of the Indies, of which Columbus was the first, though "The Admiral" was the title which he relished and by which he was usually addressed. The Discoverer never lived in the palace, however, for it was not built until three years after his death. Below the palace is a portion of the old city wall, erected in 1537, though the moat has long since been filled in. The ancient gates still remain, though they no longer afford the only means of ingress and egress for breaches have been made in the walls at most street terminations.

On the other side of the city, crowning a bluff which commands the river-mouth, is the fort of La Fuerza, the Spanish for "courage," now used as a barracks and a prison. Within its enclosure rises the Torre del Homenaje, or Tower of Homage, whose enormously thick

walls were probably built about 1500. It was the scene of the most tragic episode in the life of Columbus, for here, in a cell with a small barred window, he was imprisoned by the jealous and vindictive Bobadilla before being sent back to Spain in chains. The commander of the ship on which the Discoverer was returned to Europe offered to remove the chains, but his illustrious passenger refused, saying that he wished to appear before his sovereign in irons. He kept the manacles beside him until his death—clanking reminders of the gratitude of kings.

On the east bank of the Ozama, on a low knoll opposite the city, are the remains of the chapel built by Columbus—the first religious edifice in the New World. This is the site chosen for the projected memorial to the Discoverer, which, according to present plans, will take the form of a gigantic prostrate cross. From it an electric beacon will send skyward a pillar of light which will be visible to ships and planes a hundred miles away.

Few cities have had so many misfortunes as Santo Domingo and survived to tell about them. They began six years after its foundation, when, its few small houses destroyed by a hurricane, it was reestablished on the opposite bank of the Ozama. Fourscore years later, become one of the richest colonial cities in the world, it was captured by the English freebooter, Drake, who left it in ruins. By 1655 it had sufficiently recovered, however, to repel an attack by Admiral William Penn, whom Oliver Cromwell had sent to take it with nine thousand men. Yet early in the eighteenth century, as a result of a series of earthquakes, its population had dwinned.

dled to five hundred persons. Though its history for the past two hundred years has been punctuated with sieges, occupations, revolutions, earthquakes, and hurricanes, it has steadfastly defied the destructive efforts of nature and of man.

One's first impression is of a sun-scorched city, destitute of shade and lacking in vegetation. This is due to the great hurricane of September, 1930, when the city was virtually destroyed. In this appalling disaster upward of eight thousand persons perished, eight hundred bodies being cremated on a single pyre. Not only the city was devastated, but over a wide radius in the interior scarcely a house or a tree was left standing.

The wind-storm which brought such widespread ruin was responsible, however, for the modernization of Santo Domingo's residential quarter, which had to be completely rebuilt, and for the construction of a magnificent boulevard, the Malecón, which compares not unfavorably with Havana's sea-drive of the same name. Because of the absence of large trees and the newness of the houses the residential section has something of the aspect of a real-estate development. But the broad *avenidas*, regularly laid out and frequently with parkways down the center, are lined with small but pleasant bungalows and villas, architecturally quite unpretentious but set in gorgeous gardens. The absence of large trees is only temporary, of course, for under Caribbean skies trees shoot up with the rapidity of Jack's bean-stalk.

The hotels of Santo Domingo do not enjoy a high reputation, and on the advice of friends I put up at the Senior House, a quiet and comfortable *pension* pat-

ronized by members of the diplomatic set. News spreads rapidly in the Dominican capital, and a few hours after my arrival I received an invitation from the American Minister to a dinner which he was giving the following evening at the legation for the President of the Republic and Señora Trujillo.

The dinner was to be at eight, and at a quarter before the hour, arrayed in a stiff shirt and a freshly ironed white dinner jacket, I was ready to start. But taxis are scarce and unreliable in Santo Domingo and the one I had ordered failed to show up.

"Don't worry," the proprietor of the *pension* said reassuringly. "You have plenty of time. You can walk to your legation in ten minutes by taking a short-cut. Go out by the back door and through the garden and you will be there before you know it."

I followed this well-meant advice, but it is no easy matter to find one's way through a series of strange back-yards in the dark. I blundered into kitchen gardens, scrambled through hibiscus hedges and groped amid dense patches of tropical shrubs. Neither my appearance nor my temper were improved by falling into a clump of long-spined cactus. Presently my further progress was barred by a high fence of woven wire with a couple of strands of barbed wire along the top. It was too late to retrace my steps and I decided to climb it. Did *you* ever attempt to climb that sort of fence, in evening dress, in the dark? I was balanced precariously on the top, trying to disengage my trousers, which had been caught by one of the barbs, when two dogs suddenly appeared, one on either side of the fence.

One was a white bull terrier, the other a large and ferocious police dog. They were not friendly or to be cajoled. It was evident that they meant business. Fortunately it was a high fence, and my ankles were a few inches above their teeth, but in their attempts to reach me they displayed great energy and persistence. In trying to evade their snapping jaws, free my trousers, and preserve my balance one of my pumps fell off. The bull terrier promptly seized it and began to worry it. The illuminated dial of my wrist-watch showed three minutes to eight. And at eight I was to dine with the President! I shouted lustily for assistance. Presently a man came with an electric torch. He regarded me with disapproval and distrust. A householder is apt to be suspicious of a stranger whom he catches climbing over his back-yard fence after dark. I think that he was about to summon the police, but I managed to make him understand in my execrable Spanish that I was *un extranjero, un americano*, trying to get to *el legación de los Estados Unidos* to have *comido* with *el Presidente de la República* and *muy pronto*. Finally grasping my meaning, he bowed with the grave courtesy of a Castilian, drove off the dogs, aided me to the ground, and retrieved my pump. Scarcely pausing to thank him, I set off for the legation at a trot. Breathless and perspiring, with torn trousers, a wilted collar, and a badly chewed pump, I must have looked as though I had been on a protracted bat.

I reached the entrance to the legation grounds simultaneously with the arrival of the presidential cortège. For the inhabitants of Santo Domingo are treated to



quite a show when the President dines out. General Trujillo is a popular figure, as popularity goes in Latin America; but all dictators have their enemies, and he takes no chances.

First came a detachment of household cavalry, smart, soldierly-looking troopers on beautifully groomed horses. Halting his men, the commander sent them off in pairs to patrol the adjacent streets, in which no vehicular traffic was permitted during the dinner. Then came a car filled with members of the secret police, who, on the chance that an assassin might be lurking in the shrubbery, proceeded to search the gardens, their electric torches dancing like giant fireflies amid the foliage. A second car was filled with soldiers, who formed a cordon about the legation itself. Not until these precautions had been taken did the President and his wife, escorted by motorcyclists, put in an appearance. They came in a big red limousine which I remembered having seen on display some months before in New York. With its loopholed steel shutters, its bullet-proof glass, and a sub-caliber machine-gun poking its lean nose from the cowl, it was in effect a moving fortress.

General Rafael Leonidas Trujillo Moline (the last is his mother's name), President of the Dominican Republic, proved to be a youngish man—in his early forties, I judged—short, slender, trimly built, with an olive complexion and a closely clipped moustache. Keen, hard eyes belied his dapper, almost effeminate appearance. Though he was not in uniform, but wore instead white evening dress, beautifully cut and laundered, with a row of miniature decorations on the lapel of his

coat, he looked, and is, a soldier. He received his military training under the American marines who occupied the republic from 1916 to 1923 and is immensely proud of his association with that famous corps, of which he regards himself as a sort of honorary member. His troops are garbed in facsimiles of the uniform worn by the marines, whose swagger they ape, and visiting marine officers are always *personae gratissimae* at the palace. Though the President told me that he had never set foot outside his own country, his conversation betrayed a knowledge of world affairs which would have been remarkable even if it had not been vicarious. He was accompanied by his wife, a plump, pretty, vivacious woman, dressed in the height of the Paris mode, who had been educated abroad—in Spain, I think—and spoke quite fluent English.

The President and Señora Trujillo invited me to lunch with them the next day at the palace, known to the natives as La Casa Blanca and to Americans as the Mansion House. A large, dignified, rather homelike building of no architectural pretensions, with a broad veranda running around the ground floor and a gallery around the second, it stands in the center of a compound occupying an entire city block. Unlike the splendiferous residences of many Latin-American rulers, it is furnished simply and in excellent taste. Surrounding the palace are a number of pleasant, vine-clad bungalows occupied by government officials and foreign advisers, including the American in charge of the Dominican customs; the modern and immaculately kept barracks of the bodyguard; and the presidential stables, containing a

score or so of thoroughbreds. Close by a battalion of the Guardia Nacional and a squadron of household cavalry are quartered in barracks as scrupulously neat as those at an American army post. The palace compound is guarded by a cordon of sentries, who scrutinize every one who approaches, and at night is brilliantly illuminated by batteries of flood-lights. I noticed that when we strolled out to the stables after lunch four officers managed to be constantly at the President's side, their hands never far from the butts of the heavy Colts swinging at their thighs.

That in the limited time at my disposal I might see as much as possible of the country, President Trujillo placed at my disposal one of his cars and assigned to accompany me as cicerone the Minister of Education, Dr. Pedro Henriquez Ureña, who is one of the outstanding figures in the literary world of Latin-America and proved to be a delightful companion.

It is about one hundred and fifty miles from Santo Domingo to Puerto Plata, on the north coast, and the trip provides a cross-section of the country's physiography, resources and mode of life. At fire-engine speed we tore through little one-street towns whose names flowed from the tongue like old Spanish songs. The Latin love of color showed itself in the single-story plastered houses, tinted cobalt-blue, pale green, yellow, shell-pink, and smothered with flowering vines, including the magenta bougainvillea, which rarely harmonizes with anything. Mingled indiscriminately in the dusty dooryards of the palm-thatched huts called *bohíos* were donkeys, pigs, goats, chickens, flea-bitten dogs,

and naked brown children. Peasant farmers in flapping white garments and huge straw sombreros, machetes swinging at their thighs, ambled by on wiry, unkempt ponies. We sped past long caravans of creaking oxcarts, their wheels higher than a man, laden with cane for the sugar *centrales*. From rolling clouds of yellow dust emerged droves of diminutive burros, only their ears and tails visible beneath their burdens of fodder, fruits, vegetables, or milk-cans. Occasionally we were halted by great herds of goats which left a rancid stench in their wake.

For the first half-hundred miles after leaving the capital we traversed a level and uninteresting region which still showed the effects of the 1930 hurricane, but after a time the road began to climb the slopes of the Cordillera Central, the great range which runs the entire length of the island. This mountain barrier, some of whose peaks reach an altitude of six thousand feet and one, Mt. Tina, the highest in the West Indies, rises 10,300 feet into the blue, divides the republic into two distinct zones. That to the south is a flat region of forests, savannahs and the treeless prairies known as Los Llanos, the Plains. But to the north of the mountains lies an amazingly fertile land whose well-watered valleys, with their rich black loam, support two-thirds of the country's population.

By an endless succession of curves and zigzags and hairpin turns the road mounted the steep slopes of the Sierra de Cibao. In the forests which cover her mountains the republic has hardwoods, dyewoods, and building timber of inestimable value. Santo Domingo mahog-

any has long been famous and much sought after by makers of fine furniture, but the forests of the interior also contain hundreds of square miles of guaiacum, known to commerce as *lignum vitae*—one of the hardest woods and so heavy that when in loading a steamer a log drops into the sea it sinks to the bottom like iron—and campeche, or logwood, which is used as a dyeing material.

Descending the northern slopes of the Sierra, we emerged from the forests into a region which is probably the richest in the world. From the foot of the mountains a vast green carpet, checkered with the brown patches of tilled lands and striated with silver streams, stretched away, away, to where, far to the north, the peaks of the Monte Cristi range swam in a haze of violet and blue. Columbus, gazing upon the enchanting scene, gave to this countryside the name which it still bears—La Vega Real, the Royal Plain.

Like a lariat tossed carelessly upon the ground the road wound between groves of grapefruit, orange and lemon trees, mangoes, aguacates, papayas, sapodillas, custard apples, guanábanas, and tamarinds; pineapple, tobacco, sugar, coffee, and cacao plantations. For in this rich dark soil flourishes pretty much everything that grows under the tropic sun. Yet, owing to poor roads and lack of railways, this mine of agricultural wealth has scarcely been scratched. It is a singular thing, when you stop to think about it, that a country as rich in natural resources as the Dominican Republic should be so thinly populated. Though in area it is nearly six times the size of Porto Rico, only seventy

miles away, it has barely two-thirds as many inhabitants.

Until the collapse of the sugar market the growing of sugar cane was—and doubtless it still is—the country's chief industry. So rich are the Dominican lands that cane will grow from the same root for ten and even twenty years, whereas the soil of Porto Rico and the Lesser Antilles has been so exhausted by intensive cultivation that triennial replanting is necessary. In some of the sugar-growing districts so much land is available that the planters, rather than go to the trouble of clearing and replanting their old fields, take up virgin lands instead. But, while sugar attracts foreign capital, the Dominican's stand-by is cacao, for little land and labor are required for the cultivation of the chocolate tree and corn or bananas can be raised on the same field while the trees are maturing. "If the Dominicans would raise less hell and more cacao," an American in Santo Domingo remarked, "this country would be a paradise."

We lunched at Santiago de los Caballeros, the second largest city in the republic, a bustling, up-to-date place with an excellent hotel, far better than any in the capital, and drove on to Puerto Plata, said to be the cleanest city in the country and perhaps the most prosperous, for through it the products of the Royal Plain find their way to the United States and Europe. A narrow-gauge railway—there is only one other railway in the republic—connects Puerto Plata with Samaná Bay, the great gulf, about one hundred miles to the southeast, which is by long odds the finest harbor in the West Indies. The Navy Department in Washington has long

advocated leasing it, for it is vastly superior to Guantánamo Bay as a naval base. At one time, indeed, the Dominican Government offered to lease it to the United States, but the deal fell through because of the dilatoriness of Congress.

We returned to Santo Domingo on a Sunday, and the little towns along the way were crowded with countryfolk who had ridden in to attend the cockfights, for the *riña de gallos* plays as important a part in the life of the Spanish West Indies as the *corrida* does in that of Spain. Your Dominican is a born gambler, and on a cock which takes his fancy he will wager his last centavo, or, if he has no money, his personal belongings, even the clothes he has on.

The story is told—I do not vouch for its authenticity—of a party of American bluejackets who attended a cockfight in the vicinity of Santo Domingo during the early days of the occupation. The sailors noted with interest the eagerness of the spectators to bet on their favorite cocks.

“We’ve got a bird on the flagship,” a sailor remarked patronizingly to a Dominican, “that can clean up all the roosters in the republic.”

“Do you want to back your bird?” the native demanded.

“We sure do!” chorused the gobs. “We’ll back him to the limit. Next Saturday is pay-day, so suppose we fix up a fight for next Sunday. What say, *amigo*?”

On the appointed day a record crowd turned out, for word had spread that the Americanos had a fighting bird and plenty of money to bet on it. The sailors

arrived carrying their entry in a large canvas sack. When all was ready, with the spectators crowded about the pit twenty deep, the sailors opened the sack and dumped their bird into the ring. Whereupon from the Dominicans arose a howl of protest and indignation, for the "bird" was the ship's mascot, an American eagle.

"But you were betting on a bird, weren't you?" demanded the American spokesman in reply to the storm of angry remonstrances. "You didn't say nothing about its having to be a rooster. And this here's a bird, ain't it? What else is it? It ain't an animal! Put your bird in the ring or pay your bets."

It is said that the riot which ensued when the sailors tried to collect their bets nearly precipitated an international incident.



## V

### THE DISCOVERER'S BONES

I CAN recall no other instance of two peoples living side by side on the same island, under the same forms of government, under identical climatic and economic conditions, and having much the same ethnological and historical backgrounds, who so greatly differ in appearance and character as the Dominicans and the Haitians. Equally singular is the fact that, though the area of the Dominican Republic is nearly double that of Haiti, and far richer in natural resources, it has only about one-third of Haiti's population.

Ninety per cent of the inhabitants of Haiti are pure Negroes, the remainder mulattoes of Afro-French descent. But in the Dominican Republic the pure Negroes are in a minority, constituting probably less than one-fourth of the total population, the bulk of which consists of Afro-Spanish *mestizos* with a considerable admixture of pure Spanish whites. At least they claim to be pure whites, though there are very few of them, I imagine, who have not "a touch of the tar-brush." In color the Dominicans range from black to white, though the lighter shades predominate, and their features as a rule are Caucasian rather than Negroid. The cultural heritage of the country is that of Spain, and

Spanish is the universal language. The comparative purity with which it is spoken offers a contrast to Haiti, where the mass of the people speak Creole French, a patois unintelligible to any one who has not lived in the country. Their Spanish traditions and the strong strain of white blood in the country have had the effect of elevating all Dominicans, Negroes and *mestizos* alike. There has never been any of the hostility toward whites which is found in Haiti: on the contrary the Dominicans are anxious to be considered as belonging to the white race and always resented the policy of the American State Department in sending colored men to the republic as ministers and consuls—a policy which is no longer followed.

It is scarcely necessary to say that between the Dominicans and the Haitians no love is lost. Each people looks on the other with thinly veiled dislike and contempt. The Dominicans assert, and with considerable truth, that culturally they are infinitely superior to the Haitians. The latter retort that they are the better fighting-men, and back up their claim with the reminder that for twenty-two years—from 1822 to 1844—the Spanish-speaking portion of the island was ruled by Haiti.

The history of the Dominican Republic need not long detain us. Columbus entered Samaná Bay on his first voyage, in 1492, and on his second established on the north coast a settlement which he named Isabella and penetrated into the region which he called La Vega Real, but the Discoverer himself never visited the south coast until 1498, though by his orders the city of Santo

Domingo had been founded by his brother Bartholomew at the mouth of the Ozama two years before. The island was held by Spain as a colony until 1697, when, by the Treaty of Ryswick, she ceded the western part of the island to France. Spanish rule continued in the eastern part for nearly another century, but in 1795, when the Treaty of Basle brought an end to the war between Spain and France, the Spanish colony of Santo Domingo was ceded to France, the whole island thus passing under French control. The Spanish governor refusing to evacuate, the ceded territory was invaded in 1801 by an army commanded by the Haitian Negro, Toussaint Louverture, who raised the French tricolor, promulgated a constitution for the island, and declared himself governor-general for life.

This Franco-Haitian régime was of brief duration, however, for in 1809, England having allied herself with Spain to overthrow Napoleon, a British force was landed on the south coast near Santo Domingo, which capitulated after a siege lasting nearly nine months. In July, 1809, the French tricolor was hauled down and the country again became a Spanish dependency. But the great struggle for independence which Simon Bolívar was leading in South America was having its effect on the minds of the Dominicans, who revolted in 1821, put the Spanish governor aboard a vessel sailing for Europe, proclaimed the independent and sovereign State of Spanish Haiti, affiliated with the Republic of Colombia, and raised the Colombian flag. The State of Spanish Haiti lasted barely nine weeks, however, for early in 1822 the country was invaded by President

Boyer of Haiti, who announced that "the whole island should constitute a single republic under the Haitian flag." And for twenty-two years it did. But in 1844 the Haitians were expelled as the result of a revolution organized and led by an ardently patriotic young Dominican, Juan Pablo Duarte, who had been educated in Europe. On the night of February 27, 1844, the revolutionists took possession of the capital and the following morning the flag of the Dominican Republic, designed by Duarte, was flaunting triumphantly above the city gates. Dessalines, the emperor of Haiti, attributing all the misfortunes of his race to the whites, had ripped the white from the French tricolor, leaving a flag of red and blue. Duarte took the Haitian colors, arranged them in four alternate squares and set these squares in the arms of a white cross to signify the union of the races through Christianity.

The first republic lasted until 1861, when, on the invitation of the Dominicans themselves, who had become disgusted with their native rulers, Spain reannexed the country. But the Spanish, with their singular genius for misgovernment, soon alienated the people of the recovered colony; a revolt known as the War of the Restoration broke out, and in 1865 the red-and-yellow standard of Spain was hauled down for the third and last time.

It is not generally known, I imagine, that, had it not been for the determined opposition of a United States senator, Charles Sumner, the territory of the Dominican Republic would today be under the Stars and Stripes. By 1869 the political conditions had become so chaotic,

the interest on the public debt so ruinous, that when President Baez signed a treaty providing for the annexation of the Dominican Republic to the United States it received overwhelming approval in a popular plebiscite. When the treaty lapsed it was renewed; in his messages to Congress President Grant strongly urged its passage; but a powerful opposition, led by Senator Sumner, prevented the Senate from ratifying it. It is interesting to speculate on what the future of the country would have been under the aegis of the United States. It certainly would have been less troublesome than the Philippines, more prosperous than Porto Rico, and would have escaped nearly half a century of anarchy, revolutions, and dictatorships.

Between the establishment of the first republic in 1844 and the intervention of the United States in 1916, omitting the five-year Spanish interregnum, the Dominican Republic had forty-four administrations, one of them, that of Ulises Heureaux, lasting seventeen years. Of the other presidents, nearly every one was overthrown by revolution, forced to resign or fled the country. By 1916 conditions had become so chaotic that the United States felt compelled to intervene, and American forces were landed at Santo Domingo in the spring of that year. Our marines were already in Haiti, so that the entire island was now under American occupation.

In order to give the occupation a legal status "The Military Government of the United States in Santo Domingo" was established and a high commissioner sent down from Washington. Order and security were

soon restored, the finances were straightened out, public works, particularly roads, were constructed, and a gendarmerie organized, as in Haiti. In June, 1924, the government having been set upon its feet and taught to play the game, the American forces were withdrawn.

Politically and economically the republic is now in a fairly sound condition. This is due in no small measure to the firmness and common sense displayed by President Trujillo, who has the backing of the Government at Washington; partly to the efficiency of the constabulary trained by the American marines; partly to the fact that the collection of the Dominican customs is supervised by an American, an arrangement which is to continue until the bonds issued by the country, and in effect guaranteed by the United States, have been retired.

Proudest possession of the Dominican Republic are the remains of Christopher Columbus, which, Spanish claims to the contrary, probably rest in the cathedral of Santo Domingo. The ante-mortem travels of the Great Navigator make a curious and interesting story.

Columbus, a tired, heart-sick and prematurely aged man, died on May 20, 1506, at Valladolid, Spain. After the funeral ceremonies his remains were transferred to the Carthusian monastery of Santa María de las Cuevas in Seville, and eventually those of his son, Diego, who died twenty years later, were laid beside them. In 1542, however, in belated fulfillment of Columbus' frequently expressed wish to sleep in the soil of Hispaniola, the bodies of father and son were taken overseas and in-

tered beneath the altar platform in the cathedral of Santo Domingo, where the body of the Discoverer's grandson, Louis Columbus, was also buried. That much is undisputed. What follows is to a considerable extent circumstantial.\*

When, under the terms of the Treaty of Basle, Spain ceded the colony to France in 1795, the Madrid government ordered the remains of the Discoverer to be exhumed and sent to Havana. But it must be kept in mind that more than a century and a half had passed and in that time a good many things had happened in Santo Domingo. The cathedral had undergone extensive repairs as a result of the damage done to it by earthquakes. When Drake sacked the city in 1586 the cathedral records had been burnt. When an English fleet under Admiral William Penn appeared before the city in 1655 and landed an army the archbishop ordered that the sacred vessels and ornaments be hidden and that "the sepulchers be covered in order that no irreverence or profanation be committed against them by the heretics, and especially do I so request with reference to the sepulcher of the old Admiral which is on the gospel side of my holy church and sanctuary." It is evident from this that, if there ever were inscriptions to identify the graves of the Columbus family, they were removed at this time. After the lapse of another century tradition spoke of but two sepulchers: that of Columbus on the right-hand side of the altar; that of his son or grandson on the left.

Consequently, when orders came from Madrid to ex-

\* For a fuller account see *Santo Domingo*, by Otto Schoenrich.

hume the remains of the Discoverer—apparently nothing was said about those of the other members of his family—virtually all those entrusted with the work had to go on was the statement of the archbishop, made one hundred and forty years before, that the sepulcher of “the old Admiral” was on the gospel side of the altar—the side, that is, where the Gospels are chanted. With this lead it did not take the workmen long to uncover a shallow recess, beneath the altar platform, containing a lead coffin. Though it bore no inscription—or perhaps the inscription was illegible or had been erased—the authorities were satisfied that they had found the object of their quest. Placed in a gilded ark, the coffin was transferred on a warship fittingly named the *Descubridor* to Havana, where it was placed with much pomp and ceremony in the cathedral. When Cuba was lost to Spain as a result of the Spanish-American War, the casket was moved once more, this time to Seville, in whose cathedral, so the Spaniards maintain, the bones of Columbus now rest.

So much for the Spanish version. Now for the Dominican.

In 1877 extensive repairs were undertaken in the cathedral of Santo Domingo. While relaying the altar platform a small vault was discovered on the epistle side—that is, on the right side as one faces the altar. In the vault was a lead coffin whose inscription showed that it contained the remains of Louis Columbus, Third Admiral and grandson of the Discoverer. The finding of these long forgotten remains recalled the tradition that the body of Christopher Columbus had never been



taken to Havana, as was generally believed, but was still in Santo Domingo. On the thousand-to-one chance that this tradition might be founded on fact, the archbishop ordered the workmen to uncover the whole of the altar platform. When within a few feet of the left wall they discovered a small vault, but it was quite empty. It was evidently the one opened by the Spaniards in 1795 and its emptiness was taken as proof that the remains of the First Admiral really had been removed in that year.

In the hope of finding the remains of Diego Columbus the work was continued. On September 10, 1877, an excited priest breathlessly informed the archbishop that another vault had been found between the wall of the cathedral and the empty sepulcher, from which it was separated by a six-inch wall. And this vault held a metal coffin on which could be deciphered the inscription: "*D. de la A. Per. Ate.*," abbreviation for "*Descubridor de la América, Primer Almirante*"—"Discoverer of America, First Admiral"!

Work was immediately halted, the doors of the cathedral locked and the president of the republic notified. Not until the members of the government and the diplomatic corps had been assembled did the archbishop permit a further examination of the vault's contents. What had been discovered was not a coffin, in the generally accepted meaning of the word, but a lead box of rude construction, oxidized and dented, about sixteen inches long, eight inches wide, and eight deep. On the inner side of the lid, in Gothic characters, was a series of abbreviations for "*Ilustre y Esclarecido Varón*

*Don Cristóbal Colón*—"Illustrious and Noble Man, Christopher Columbus." Within the box were some two-score fragments of bone, large and small, including a portion of the skull, and a quantity of bone dust. And, by way of clinching the authenticity of the find, a small silver plate bearing a rude inscription stating that the casket contained the "last part of the remains of the first Admiral, Don Christopher Columbus, Discoverer."

Here, as the events have been reconstructed, is probably what happened in 1795. Having uncovered a casket in the approximate location where Columbus was reputed to have been buried, the Spanish authorities jumped to the conclusion that it held the remains of the Discoverer, though it bore no inscription, and did not press their search further. This casket, shipped to Havana and now in Seville, may be assumed to contain the bones of Diego Columbus. The searchers missed the remains of the Discoverer himself by only six inches.

With the possible exception of the Spanish consul, there was no doubt on the part of the distinguished assembly present at the exhumation as to the authenticity of the find, for the inscriptions on the casket were obviously genuine and the archbishop and his subordinates above suspicion. Accordingly the casket was enclosed in a magnificent bronze sarcophagus, which was placed under an ornate marble monument at the end of the nave of the cathedral, near the entrance. Without the ancient structure bands blared the national anthem and cannon crashed in a one-hundred-and-one-gun salute.

Though there are those, particularly in Spain, who dispute the Dominican claim to the possession of the Discoverer's remains, it is supported by evidence considerably more convincing than that which led the American Government to bring back from a Paris cemetery and enshrine in Annapolis the remains of another great admiral, John Paul Jones.

The American Minister and I were discussing the singular fashion in which fate had intervened to prevent the body of Columbus being removed from the New World that he had found.

"What wouldn't I give to see his bones!" I exclaimed. "The actual bones—not merely the coffin. But I suppose that is absolutely out of the question."

"I'm not so sure," the minister replied. "Perhaps it can be arranged."

The following morning, just as I was setting out for Puerto Plata, I was summoned to the palace.

"Your minister tells me," said President Trujillo, "that you have expressed a wish to view the remains of Columbus. Though I should be delighted to grant it, it is not as simple a matter as you may assume. For the sarcophagus has three locks and it is necessary to assemble the three keys before it can be opened. One is in the custody of the archbishop, who is ill; another is kept by the mayor of Santo Domingo, who is on a trip in the interior; the third is in my possession. But I shall see what can be done."

Upon returning to the capital late the following afternoon I found awaiting me a note from the president's secretary. "Arrangements have been made," it read, "for

you to view the remains of Columbus at eight o'clock this evening."

Dr. Ureña called for me and we drove to the cathedral. In spite of the absence of towers or spires it is an impressive building, perhaps because of its antiquity, for it was built more than a century before the Pilgrims sighted the coast of New England. Awaiting us at the door of the sacristy was a priest in the cowed robe and sandals of some monastic order. He carried three large brass keys, elaborately wrought. A lean, ascetic figure, suggestive of a dim and distant past, he might have been one of those Spanish friars who befriended the discouraged Genoese.

Though it was the evening of Palm Sunday the cathedral was dark and deserted. But the great doors giving on the plaza had been thrown open, so that the area immediately within was illumined by the tropic moon—a great silver disk swinging in a sky profounder than purple. Drenched in its soft radiance was the massive bronze sarcophagus, which rested on a marble plinth, beneath an ornate canopy of bronze and marble, at the entrance to the nave. The heavy silence was broken only by our muffled footsteps and a gentle night-breeze whispering amid the palm-fronds. No stage director could have devised a more dramatic setting.

The priest inserted his keys into the three locks of the sarcophagus and we helped him to raise the ponderous lid. Then, opening the lid of the casket within, he handed me a lighted candle and motioned me to mount a wooden prayer-stool. I did so—and looked down into

a leaden box, too small to be called a coffin, containing a bit of whitened skull and a few bleached bones.

An Oxford professor, a distinguished scientist, who was one of the official witnesses when the coffin containing the remains of King Richard I was exhumed, told me that the most memorable moment of his life was when he beheld, for a brief space before they crumbled into dust, the features of the crusading English monarch known as "Cœur de Lion."

I know that one of the most memorable moments of my life was when, in a darkened West Indian cathedral, by the light of a guttering candle, I beheld all that is mortal of Christopher Columbus, Grand Admiral of Spain, Viceroy of the Indies, Discoverer of the New World.

## VI

### WHITE MAN'S BURDEN

I IMAGINE that in the old days, before the Americans came, Porto Rico was far more interesting and attractive than it is at present. For wherever we hoist the Stars and Stripes on foreign soil we seem to have an unhappy faculty for destroying the indigenous atmosphere and charm. In our passion for meddling, reforming, and uplifting we have robbed our oversea possessions of everything that is colorful, easy-going, and characteristic. The British say we are a nation of plumbers, and the charge is not unjustified, for upon taking over a country our chief ambition apparently is to install in every house running water, a flush toilet, and a bathtub. Before we have been in possession ninety days both natives and dogs have been deprived of the pleasure of scratching themselves. We build sewers and roads, establish hospitals and schools, speed up industry and traffic, introduce new methods in everything from agriculture to the treatment of zymosis, but usually at the cost of irritating the natives and always at the cost of destroying much that should be preserved. This is particularly true of Porto Rico, where in less than forty years we have destroyed the pleasant, contented, romantic atmosphere which it took the Spaniards nearly four hundred years to create.

The trouble with us, as one shrewd observer, Mr. Hyatt Verrill, has remarked, is that we cannot colonize unless we Americanize. We refuse to admit that ideas which may work out admirably in Smith Center, Kansas, are not equally applicable to the tropics. When the British go into another country they leave things alone so far as possible, but we are all for "improving" it. In the Hawaiian Islands, for example, the graceful and sensible native costume has disappeared because we considered it immodest. Instead of erecting buildings which harmonize with the native architecture, and are in keeping with the traditions of the country, we put up structures which, however well adapted to their purposes, are wholly alien to their environment. The lovely old-rose tiles of the Spanish era are, we concede, undeniably picturesque, but not nearly as "practical" as the metal and composition roofings used in the United States. In our passion for Americanizing everything we are like the Germans, who tried to make over their African colonial towns into feeble imitations of Düsseldorf and Nuremberg. In Morocco, on the other hand, the French have erected scores of magnificent government buildings, but they had the good taste and the good sense to build them in the Moorish style, so that they fit into the picture and pay tribute to the architectural genius of the people who built the Alhambra and the Alcazar.

We all know women who, though beautiful, smartly groomed, and with irreproachable manners, are devoid of fascination and glamour. That is the impression made

by Porto Rico on most travelers who are familiar with the other islands of the West Indies. Those who go there expecting to find magnificent scenery, interesting architecture, colorful costumes, primitive customs, novelty, mystery, romance, will be disappointed.

It is the only one of the Greater Antilles which is practically denuded of its forests; the only one which is densely populated—it has more inhabitants to the square mile than Connecticut; the only one which is completely modernized and has a stable government. Lacking are the heavily wooded, ten-thousand-foot mountains and riotously luxuriant vegetation of the neighboring islands. Its scenery, though frequently charming, does not possess the savage grandeur of the Cordillera Central in the Dominican Republic. It has no buildings which so appeal to the imagination as the mighty citadel built on a Haitian mountain peak by King Christophe. Rarely seen are the silken shawls and lace mantillas worn by the women of other Spanish-American countries or the brilliant turbans of Jamaica and Martinique. Its hills do not echo the throb of voodoo drums but the bleating of radios and phonographs. No dictator drives out in an armored car surrounded by a clattering escort, though the American governor may frequently be seen driving his own Ford. The capital, San Juan, has none of Havana's infectious gaiety. No sinuous, half-clad octoroons dance the *rumba* to the beat of tom-toms and the wail of flutes, but every afternoon there is a tea dance at the Condado. And—though I suppose this should be regarded as a recom-



mendation—there are no rumblings of revolution to give life a spice of apprehension and excitement.

By way of compensation, however, Porto Rico has as good roads as you will find anywhere, modern methods of transportation, extraordinary cleanliness and health, and an agreeable climate—provided you like heat. The capital has a four-hundred-year-old castle; an ancient fortress complete with dungeons (but no political prisoners) and moat, a number of more or less interesting churches, in one of which are entombed the remains of the first Florida tourist, Ponce de Leon, and a tall modern hotel which might have been transplanted bodily from the United States. Glimpses of some very charming mountain scenery may be had from the Military Road which connects San Juan and Ponce. On the plantations may be observed the cultivation of such tropical products as sugar cane, coffee, tobacco, and coconuts. There are several excellent golf courses. There is wonderful sea bathing. And on Sundays there are cockfights. The law prohibiting these was only recently repealed, though for centuries they had provided the natives with their favorite form of amusement. The repeal of the anti-cockfight law was bitterly opposed by many of the American uplifters, on the ground that the Porto Ricans should not be permitted to enjoy what is prohibited in the United States.

The Porto Rican capital is built on a narrow island, about two miles long, which is connected with the mainland by a causeway. Guarding the mouth of the landlocked harbor is El Morro, reminiscent of Havana's citadel of the same name, which for centuries success-

fully defied the English, Dutch, and French sea-rovers who ravaged the other countries of the Spanish Main.

From the busy waterfront, bristling with masts and funnels, the quaint old Spanish town, with its ancient walls and gateways, its labyrinth of narrow streets and alleys, its low, red-tiled houses, either whitewashed or calcimined in blue, pink, yellow, or green, clings to the steep slopes of a hill crowned by the immense fortress of San Cristóbal and its outlying fortifications. In earlier times one of the most formidable strongholds in the New World, today not a single piece of ordnance frowns from its ramparts as a reminder of the glorious past, for the treaty which ended the Spanish-American War stipulated that its guns should be retained by Spain. Most governments would have followed the example set by a wealthy and patriotic American at Ticonderoga and restored the historic fortress to its original appearance. But we, being an eminently practical and matter-of-fact people, chose to deface it by erecting on the glacis a row of dwellings for the officers of the garrison. These small, cheap, boxlike yellow structures have been placed within full view of the harbor and the town—festering pimples on the bosom of a stately woman.

During the four days I spent in Porto Rico I was the guest of the governor at La Fortaleza, the castle, commenced in 1533, which was the official residence of the Spanish governors-general, as it has been of the American governors who succeeded them. Save that it was painted rose-pink during the régime of Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., its external appearance has undergone lit-

tle change in four centuries. Its crenelated ramparts rise sheer from the edge of one of the bluest harbors in the world; its mullioned windows command entrancing views of sea, city, plains, and mountains; in its subterranean vaults was stored the treasure looted from the New World by the conquistadors and awaiting shipment to Spain; its scented garden, high above the harbor, is the sort of place one would choose to stroll with Her beneath a tropic moon.

The interior of the palace, though comfortable, is not palatial. The furniture, though not Grand Rapids, is nondescript and largely modern. On the walls are lifesize portraits, extremely mediocre as to workmanship but with imposing frames, of all the American military and civil governors from General Brooke down. I shall always recall La Fortaleza as the only place I have ever stayed where my garments, inner and outer, mysteriously disappeared when I retired, only to reappear, washed and ironed, the following morning.

In San Juan medievalism and modernity rub shoulders, for rising contemptuously above the squat, thick-walled structures of the Spanish period, with their brass-studded doors and wrought-iron grills and tiled patios, are lofty American office buildings with elevators and plate-glass windows. The shopping district, most of which is within a stone's throw of the Plaza Principal, is crowded into a comparatively small space inside the city walls. Many of the streets are scarcely wider than alleys, and, owing to the steepness of the terrain, are connected only by flights of stone steps. Motorists unfamiliar with the singular lay-out of the city frequently enter one of these

narrow thoroughfares, presently come to a dead-end, and, finding it impossible to turn around, are compelled to back out. The narrowness of the streets and the introduction of great numbers of motor vehicles have produced a traffic problem which would give a New York traffic cop the jitters, though it seems to be handled quite efficiently by the local police.

San Juan has none of the fascinating little shops one finds in many of the Spanish-American cities. The tourist in quest of curios and antiques will find little to attract him, for scant attempt has been made to encourage native handicrafts—save embroidery and drawn-work—and the Americans who came down in the early days of the occupation picked up most of the worthwhile antiques. So far as its shops are concerned, San Juan is about on a par with any progressive city of 75,000 inhabitants in the United States. Its department stores feature the same fashions that are shown in American cities—though only in summer garments; there are drug stores which sell pretty much everything but drugs; five-and-ten-cent stores, exactly like those at home, even to the red-and-gold signs, though the pretty shopgirls usually address the customers as “señor” or “señora” instead of “dearie.”

The Porto Rican capital should be a cheap place in which to live, but it is not. Though sea-food, fruits, and vegetables are plentiful, the cost of living is no lower than in the United States. House-rents are exorbitant and servants, usually lazy and inefficient, demand twice the wages paid in the other West Indian islands for domestic help.

There may be noisier cities than San Juan somewhere in the world, but it has never been my bad fortune to stay in them, thank God. Not only has it an amazing assortment of noises, but, owing to the narrow, shut-in streets, every noise is enormously magnified. The honking of motor cars, clangor of street-cars, grinding of brakes, rumble of cart-wheels, clatter of hoofs, back-firing of motor cycles, tinkle of bicycle bells, clang of ice-cream venders' gongs, shrieks of newsboys, bellow of radios, squawk of phonographs, blare of street bands, thrum of guitars, braying of donkeys, bleating of goats, shouts of children, shrilling of policemen's whistles, tooting of harbor craft, chugging of switch engines, and the clamor of thousands of high-pitched Latin voices weave themselves into a horrendous bombilation which beats with maddening insistence against the eardrums and scarifies the nerves.

A short distance beyond La Fortaleza, clinging to the hillside above the harbor, is the long, low, rambling building known as La Casa Blanca. According to tradition it was occupied by Ponce de Leon while he was viceroy of the island and is now the official residence of the officer commanding the American troops. Entombed in the cathedral are the ashes of the conquistador who discovered Florida while in quest of the Fountain of Eternal Youth.

In a newly developed district on the outskirts of the old city, overlooking the fine esplanade known as the Marina, is the Capitol, a showy and expensive structure of white marble, which, like the capitol in Havana, has no architectural relation to its surroundings. The

disappointing interior, poorly decorated and cheaply furnished, suggests that the builders ran out of funds. Just beyond the Capitol are the beautiful buildings of the School of Tropical Medicine—maintained, I believe, by the Rockefeller Foundation. The research work carried on by its staff of brilliant scientists has put an end to the epidemics which formerly ravaged Porto Rico, has increased labor efficiency fifty per cent by eradicating hookworm, and has made the island one of the healthiest places in the world.

The principal residential quarter of the city is across the causeway, on the mainland. The houses are, on the whole, small and without architectural pretensions; there is a noticeable absence of large trees; and for a tropical country the gardens are disappointing. This is due in large measure to the enormous damage caused by the great hurricane of 1928, which killed hundreds of persons and laid a third of the capital in ruins.

The chief objection to Porto Rico as a place of residence is that it is in the hurricane zone, though the same may be said of the other West Indian islands; nor is Florida immune from these dreaded visitations. When these terrific wind storms come, usually in September, the largest trees are uprooted or snapped off, gardens are destroyed, frame dwellings are smashed into kindling wood or carried away bodily, roofs are ripped off as by a giant hand, buildings are flooded with water to a depth of several feet, the lighting and telephone systems are wrecked, trains are derailed and motor cars blown over, and the air is filled with flying fragments of wood and metal which are as deadly as shrapnel.

The force of these storms is incredible to one who has not witnessed them or their effects. It is impossible to stand up in a wind of more than one hundred miles an hour, and most hurricanes attain that velocity without half trying. The stoutest doors are wrenched from their hinges. Splinters of wood and metal are driven through thick walls as though they were made of cardboard. Doors, shutters, roofs, whole verandas, telephone poles even, go sailing down the wind like autumn leaves. The heavens open and the rain descends in torrents as solid as those which pour over the brink at Niagara. The world drifts by in fragments to the accompaniment of an appalling cannonade, as though a barrage was being laid down by thousands of field-guns. That is a hurricane. It brings death to many, ruin to many more.

Though San Juan is the seat of government, Ponce, on the Caribbean side, is the largest town. If time is of no consequence and you enjoy railway travel, you can make the trip in about ten hours by the narrow-gauge line which runs four-fifths of the way around the island. The railway's toylike sleeping cars differ from any others that I have seen in that the compartments are triangular.

I should strongly advise the visitor to hire a motor car, however, and drive across the island by the Carretera, or Military Road. This splendid highway, built by Spanish military engineers, climbs to a height of some two thousand feet in crossing the central range and discloses numerous entrancing views, for both the Atlantic and the Caribbean are visible from the summit.

By making an early start one may obtain a very fair idea, in a single day, of the native life and natural resources of the island.

For the first dozen miles or so the road leads across a level plain, which, from a distance, appears to be covered with snow. This is one of the tobacco-growing regions, and over the fields hundreds of thousands of yards of white cheesecloth are stretched to prevent the wrapper leaves from being burned by the sun. The Porto Ricans will assure you that their soil produces as fine tobacco as is grown in Cuba, and when I left the island the governor presented me with a box of excellent cigars. But I must confess to a prejudice in favor of the tobacco raised in Cuba's Vuelta Abajo.

Beyond Caguas, which is one of the centers of the tobacco industry, the road is bordered for a mile or more by the trees the Spaniards call *flamboyantes* and we know as poincianas, whose scarlet-flowered branches form a flaming canopy overhead. Gradually the road begins to climb, scaling the mountain-side in an interminable series of serpentine curves and hairpin turns. It runs along the brinks of dizzy precipices, creeps around jutting shoulders on narrow shelves blasted from the solid rock, is carried on ancient Spanish bridges across deep barrancas choked with palms and tree-ferns. White and mauve and yellow orchids swing from the branches of the trees like incandescent lights.

Reaching the summit of the divide, the road drops down to Cayey, a white-walled, red-roofed town set on the floor of a lush green valley. Here are the cantonments of the Sixty-fifth Infantry, the Porto Rican



regiment, for the Washington Government has shown great good sense in garrisoning the island with native troops. Consequently, there is no hostility on the part of the civilian population toward the military, as is the case in India and in Egypt, where the natives bitterly resent the presence of British soldiery.

In climate, situation, appearance, and character Ponce is very different from San Juan, and, indeed, from any of the other Porto Rican towns. Though English is more generally spoken than in the capital, the atmosphere of Ponce is far more Spanish, the people are less Americanized, the buildings are more generally of Hispanic architecture, the life is less strenuous, the climate is much warmer. Yet it is a busy, thriving town, for through it is shipped much of the sugar, coffee, and tobacco grown on the island. Less subject to hurricanes than San Juan, its broad thoroughfares are shaded by fine old trees, and the people seem to have a passion for flowers, for every garden, patio, and balcony is gay with blossoms. Ponce has the best theater in Porto Rico, a Casino whose bartender mixes better Daiquirí cocktails than you can get in Cuba, a firehouse which is architecturally a cross between Nuremberg and Coney Island, and, I gathered, the wealthiest, most Spanish and most exclusive society on the island.

Porto Rico is the only West Indian island in which the whites outnumber the blacks and mulattoes combined. Near the coast and in the larger towns are large numbers of Negroes, both native born and from the British, French, and Dutch possessions; but in the interior the majority of the inhabitants are of pure Span-

ish descent, and these, with the jibaros, or poor whites, form the bulk of the population. Most of the commercial enterprises and many of the large plantations are in Spanish hands, and to this is due a large measure of the island's prosperity, for the colonial Spaniard is invariably a smart, thrifty, and progressive business man. In their social life there is little mingling of the whites and blacks, though to the casual observer there is apparently no color line.

The Porto Ricans are the only Latin-American people whose history has not been punctuated with revolutions. Yet they have shown themselves valorous fighters on numerous occasions, for during the four hundred years between the discovery of the island by Columbus and its annexation by the United States its inhabitants suppressed Indian risings, drove off the pirates who were constantly harassing the coasts of the Spanish Main, and successfully resisted attempts at conquest by England, France, and Holland.

Porto Rico was discovered by Columbus on his second voyage. He went ashore on the northwest coast—the town of Aguadilla, with twenty-five thousand inhabitants, a railway, a sugar-mill, and a cigar factory marks the site today—unfurled the standard of Leon and Castile, took possession in the name of the Spanish king, named the island San Juan Bautista, and sailed away, never to return.

But accompanying the Admiral was a young gentleman adventurer named Juan Ponce de Leon. He settled for a time in Santo Domingo, but he could not erase from his mind the memory of the smaller island, with

its bright green plains and dark green forests stretching away to mountains shimmering in a violet haze, and fifteen years later he returned to it at the head of an expedition of his own. Landing on the shores of Aguada Bay, at the western extremity of the island, he followed the northern coast until he came upon an almost land-locked harbor which he named "Puerto Rico" because he envisioned it as an outlet for the natural wealth of the hinterland. Here, on a little coastwise island, he founded the city of San Juan.

But, like all the conquistadors, Ponce de Leon had led a dissolute and strenuous life—wine, women, Indians, and a steel harness under a tropic sun were enough to prematurely age the most vigorous man—and by the time he had reached the late fifties he felt himself slipping. So, when he heard from the natives a rumor of an island, far to the north, with a spring whose waters had the power to make one young again, he set out to find it, for they were a credulous lot, those early Spaniards, in spite of being notoriously hard-boiled. The climate of Florida, if not its drinking water, may have given the worn adventurer a new lease of life, as it has many tired business men, but it did not make him impervious to an Indian arrow. He succumbed to the wound in 1521, shortly after he and his exhausted followers reached Havana.

The citadel which guards the entrance to San Juan harbor, the remarkable system of fortifications which encircle the city, and the palace known as La Casa Blanca were all built or started by Ponce de Leon. More than any other man he was the father of Porto

Rico. Yet its finest hotel, which is likewise one of its most imposing buildings, does not bear the name of the intrepid Spanish explorer.

From early in the sixteenth century until the close of the eighteenth, Porto Rico was constantly harassed by pirates and freebooters, English, French, and Dutch. In 1535 and again in 1543 several of the smaller towns were sacked and burned by French privateersmen. In 1565 Sir John Hawkins made a descent upon the island, seven years later it was raided by Sir Francis Drake, and in 1595 the two captains, learning that a treasure galleon was in San Juan harbor, combined their forces in a third attempt. But the powerful forts and the stubborn resistance offered by the garrison could not be overcome even by the great captains who had smashed the Invincible Armada. Better would it have been for the freebooting Englishmen had they never set eyes on Porto Rico, for Hawkins died off the eastern end of the island, and Drake, his fleet nearly annihilated by the guns of San Cristóbal and the Morro, died ere he could reach Porto Bello and was buried "slung atween the round-shots in Nombre Dios Bay."

The English are a stubborn race, however, and two years after the discomfiture of Hawkins and Drake a powerful force under Lord Cumberland succeeded in taking San Juan by attacking it from the land side; but disease broke out among the invaders, and they were compelled to relinquish their hard-won prize. In 1625 the Dutch tried their luck, but they found San Juan too hard a nut to crack and sullenly sailed away. Almost at the close of the century the British attacked

the city for a fifth time, only to be again repulsed.

For a hundred years Porto Rico enjoyed uninterrupted peace. But in 1898 another hostile fleet appeared off the Morro—great white ships of steel from whose taff-rails fluttered the Stars and Stripes. Yet the storms of steel loosed by the modern guns of Admiral Sampson's battleships did comparatively little damage to the ancient fortifications. There was not much fighting, however, for before the American army which had landed on the south coast could reach the capital word was received of the signing in Paris of a treaty of peace. On August 12, 1898, the red-and-yellow standard which had flown over the island for four hundred years was hauled down amid tears and cheers and a red-white-and-blue flag was hoisted in its place. On the same day, half the world away, the American flag was raised over the Hawaiian Islands. The United States had become a world power.

The military government established in 1898 by General Brooke, and carried on by General Henry, was superseded in 1900 by a civil administration. The Organic Act passed by the American Congress, on which the present governmental system of Porto Rico is based, provided for a governor to be appointed by the President of the United States, an Executive Council and a Legislature. In theory Porto Rico's system of government is an excellent one, but no sooner had the military handed the reins of power over to the civil administration than the island became a football for American and native politicians. Though totally without experience in colonial administration, the majority of the

American governors have been able and conscientious men; but some of them, appointed for political reasons, proved unfitted for the job and by their tactlessness and ignorance of native customs exasperated and antagonized the population.

The political history of Porto Rico under American administration has been marred by an almost unbroken series of squabbles between the governor and the legislature. This is hardly surprising, however, for, though we have been a colonial power for nearly forty years, we have developed no class of trained colonial administrators, as have Britain, France, and Holland. Though our outlying dependencies have a total area of more than seven hundred thousand square miles, and a population of more than twelve million, we have no Department of the Colonies—indeed, the very word “colony” is anathema to Americans—the Philippines and the Canal Zone being under the army, Samoa and Guam under the navy, Alaska, Hawaii, Porto Rico, and the Virgin Islands under the Department of the Interior.

When we took possession of the island in 1898, Porto Rico was quaint, quiet, picturesque, with the *dolce far niente* atmosphere and indefinable charm of most Spanish colonies. It was also one of the dirtiest and most unhealthy countries in the western hemisphere. Epidemics were constantly breaking out, and the death rate was excessive, for there was practically no efficient sanitation in the island. The prevalence of hookworm disease diminished labor efficiency at least fifty per cent. The cemeteries were so small and crowded that plots were only rented for a limited time, at the expiration

of which the remains were exhumed and tossed into an *osario*, or bone-bin. Of the entire population four-fifths could neither read nor write, and there was only one building on the island specially erected for purposes of education. The filthy, vermin-infested jails were filled with prisoners, some of whom had been in so long that the records of their trials and sentences had been lost. Oxen, horses and donkeys provided the only transportation. There was no freedom of speech or of the press. The insular administration was rotten with inefficiency and corruption.

Today all that is changed. Under the American régime sewers have been laid, supplies of pure drinking water provided, sanitary plumbing made compulsory, zymotic diseases eradicated, and the island made as healthy as any section of the continental United States. More than two thousand school buildings have been erected, a university established, and the percentage of illiteracy cut in half. The prisons are scrupulously clean and well managed. The various towns are connected by as fine a highway system as can be found anywhere. The latest methods of agriculture, household economy, and the care of children have been introduced. Though we have suppressed bullfighting and for a time prohibited cockfighting and the use of alcoholic beverages, we have erected in San Juan an imposing Y.M.C.A.

One might suppose that for all this the Porto Ricans would be deeply grateful. But they are not. This is because, with the best intentions in the world but with no colonial experience, we have failed to take into account the complications produced by race, language,

tradition, history, and climate. Though the Porto Ricans are by no means unappreciative of the material improvements we have made in the island, they resent our attempts to Americanize them. No fair-minded person will deny that under American rule Porto Rico has become a vastly cleaner, healthier, more progressive country than it was under the rule of Spain; but I doubt if the mass of the people are as contented, and I am sure that life is not as pleasant, as in "the good old days."



## VII

### VEXATIOUS VIRGINS

OFF the eastern end of Porto Rico, separated from it by only about thirty miles of water, are the Virgin Islands. Three of them—Saint Thomas, Saint John, and Saint Croix—belong to the United States; the others are British possessions.

In 1917, alarmed by the rumor that Germany was secretly negotiating for their acquisition as a submarine base, we bought them from Denmark for \$25,000,000 gold, which works out at about \$285 an acre. This makes them our most expensive real estate investment, for we paid Russia only \$7,000,000 for Alaska and swung the Philippine deal for \$20,000,000.

We did not pay this fancy price on account of their commercial value, because the islands have no minerals and not much more than half of their total area is adapted to cultivation, but for strategic reasons. Saint Thomas is 1,434 miles from New York and 1,029 miles from the Panama Canal, and the narrow passage between it and Porto Rico forms one of the most important gateways to the Caribbean. The Straits of Florida are, of course, as completely dominated by the United States as the Straits of Gibraltar are by Britain. Our great naval base at Guantánamo Bay gives us con-

trol of the Windward Passage between Cuba and Haiti. In Porto Rico we have the key to the Mona Passage between that island and the Dominican Republic. Consequently, in acquiring the Virgins we virtually made the Caribbean, from a strategic point of view, a *mare nostrum*.

The Pan-American planes fly in only about an hour from San Juan to Saint Thomas, but, as there is only one plane a week, the south-bound traveler has to choose between fifteen minutes and seven days in the Virgins. If you are not pressed for time I should advise you to stop over a plane, for you will see some very beautiful islands. But don't stop there unless you are prepared to have your pride in American administrative ability rudely jolted. The condition of the Virgin Islands after nearly twenty years of Uncle Sam's paternal rule does not call for any loud hurrahs by Americans.

I am at a loss for a term which defines the exact relation of the islands to the United States, for the words "colony," "dependency," and "possession" are all anathema to the Washington Government, presumably because of their imperialistic implications. Though the Virgins are certainly not a territory, like Alaska or Hawaii, the Bureau of Information of the Interior Department euphemistically describes them as "enjoying a territorial status," though whether their inhabitants actually enjoy their present status is open to question.

The plane lands at Charlotte Amalie, the seat of government, on Saint Thomas Island. A small and very clean town, its red-roofed, white, pink, or buff buildings rising from the shores of its landlocked harbor, it

has little to offer in the way of interest or charm, though I am told that it was quite a delightful place in the old days, before the Americans destroyed its drowsy, easy-going atmosphere.

You can see what little there is to be seen in an hour or so of brisk walking, or climbing rather, for the town is built on the slopes of an extinct volcano. Consequently its streets are on many levels, and these are frequently connected by long flights of worn stone stairs, which are hard on the lungs and the leg muscles but doubtless help to cleanse the system by inducing profuse perspiration. There is the usual West Indian market, where locally made imitations of Panama hats and a bewildering variety of tropical fruits and vegetables are displayed in stalls presided over by stout Negro women in voluminous Mother Hubbards and vivid bandannas. Or you can stop in at the unimposing Government House, where earnest young men welcome all who are seeking information and overwhelm them with statistics and propaganda.

High above the town, and its only outstanding architectural feature, is the old stone tower known as Blackbeard's Castle, though the more skeptical question the truth of the legend that it was once a stronghold of the notorious Captain Teach, asserting that it was originally a Danish windmill. Not far away is a similar structure, likewise with alleged picaresque associations, which the American administration, with funds provided by the P.W.A., has transformed into a tourist hostelry. What a kick for the bearded old ruffian who used it as a hang-out if he could have seen the notices announcing that

on Christmas Day, 1934, the Bluebeard Castle Hotel would be "open for business"!

Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Virgins were a favorite haunt of the buccaneers who plied their trade upon the Spanish Main. Here, owing to the weakness of the Danish government and the cupidity of the Danish merchants, these gangsters of the sea could find refuge from the English, French and Spanish warships sent out to hunt them down; here they could repair and refit their vessels, exchange the spoils from looted towns for provisions, native rum, and the favors of women.

Those were boom times in the Virgins. In their harbors lay lean black craft with enormous spreads of canvas and bristling with guns, though, in deference to Danish susceptibilities, the Jolly Roger was hauled down until they put to sea again. Fierce-faced, bearded, earringed men in gold-laced coats and rakish hats, cutlasses at their thighs, long-barreled pistols in their belts, the roll of the sea in their gait, swaggered through the narrow streets of the island towns. Through the iron-barred windows of the old stone houses came the shrieks of terrified girls or the high-pitched laughter of brazen women. The wine-shops along the waterfront resounded to the clatter of pewter goblets, the clink of moidores and pieces-of-eight, shouts, obscenities, oaths, sometimes the crack of pistols, and hoarse male voices raised in the pirates' rollicking refrain:

*Fifteen men on the dead man's chest!  
Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!*

The "chest" referred to in the chantey, however, was neither the hirsute breast of a deceased buccaneer nor one of the brass-bound coffers described in *Treasure Island*, but a tiny islet, a barren rock, known as Dead Man's Chest, a few miles off Saint Thomas, on which Teach is reputed to have marooned fifteen of his crew, without food and without rum, by way of instilling a lesson in discipline. On another occasion, it is said, Teach imprisoned a number of his men in the hold of his ship, filled it with sulphur fumes, and left them there until they were nearly asphyxiated in order to show them what hell was like. A charming gentleman, this one-time officer in His Britannic Majesty's navy who became the scourge of the Spanish Main.

Whereas Saint Thomas is bare, brown, with scanty vegetation, Saint John, only a few miles away and accessible by sailing boat or inter-island steamer, is the tropical isle of boyhood's imagination, with heavily wooded hills, impenetrable jungles, and lush green valleys down which meander little streams. Though today its inhabitants number only about eight hundred, it was once a fairly thickly settled island. It was depopulated and ruined by the bloody slave insurrections of the early eighteenth century, when the blacks rose in revolt, massacred their white masters, captured the fort, burned the plantations, and were subdued only after the Danes had virtually exterminated them.

The third of the American Virgins, by far the largest in area and population, is Saint Croix, or Santa Cruz, if you prefer its Spanish name. It is one of the most beautiful of the West Indian islands. Settled by English,

Dutch, and French colonists, and long used by the buccaneers as a base for their operations in the Caribbean, it was finally awarded to France by one of the numerous treaties whereby the European powers gave a semblance of legality to their land-grabbing. In 1651 France sold it to the Knights Hospitalers of St. John of Jerusalem—the Knights of Malta, as they are better known. Here, as in the Mediterranean, they established an insular stronghold, and here for six years they maintained a little kingdom of their own. But they could not make a go of it—perhaps because they were better qualified for fighting infidels than for running tropical plantations—and, commandeering a French vessel, they forced the captain to take them, bag and baggage, to South America. After the departure of the knights there was no established government and no semblance of order in Saint Croix, which remained a sort of no man's island until the Danes took possession.

The capital and *chef-lieu* of Saint Croix is Frederiksted, or, as the natives call it, "West End." From the tourist's point of view it has little to offer in the way of attractions, though with its pastel-tinted dwellings, its low doorways opening on courtyards gay with flowers, its thick-walled warehouses whose dim interiors offer a grateful retreat from the heat and blinding sun-glare, it is a very tropical-looking and pictorial little town.

Here, shortly before the outbreak of the American Revolution, an English lad from the British island of Nevis sat on a high stool in the countinghouse of Nikolas Cruger, bent over the ponderous ledgers. He must have been an extraordinarily competent youngster, for,

his employer going abroad, he was left in charge of the business when he was only fifteen. Though he came of excellent stock, the fact that his parents had never married made his social position in that small community a very trying one. When the great hurricane of 1772 devastated the island he wrote such a vivid account of the disaster to friends in New York that they, impressed by his ability and literary talent, made it possible for him to complete his education on the mainland, at King's College, now Columbia University. His subsequent career proved the truth of the adage "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," for, had it not been for the great wind which wrecked Saint Croix in the eighteenth century, the United States would not have been guided through one of its most troublous and trying periods by a statesman and financial genius named Alexander Hamilton.

When we purchased the Virgin Islands from Denmark in 1917 the colony, though far from prosperous, was at least a going concern. Living and everything else was amazingly cheap, for its ports were free and to them came ships from all parts of the Caribbean to refit, to coal, or to trade. While wages were low, those natives willing to work were able to earn a livelihood on the plantations. The Danish merchants carried on a profitable business in sugar, molasses, rum, and bay rum—the first three made from cane, the last from the leaves of the bayberry tree. The Negroes and mulattoes who formed nine-tenths of the population were poor, but no poorer than the blacks of the other West Indian islands. If they were ragged, lazy, ignorant, and super-

stitious, they were at the same time cheerful, respectful, law-abiding, and reasonably contented. They did not regard themselves as downtrodden victims of a pernicious economic system. On the contrary they were quite satisfied to loaf in the hot sunshine or to potter about their palm-thatched cabins, to live on fish and fruit and yams, to work just long enough to earn the price of a new pair of shoes or a gaudy shirt or a ticket to the local movie or a bottle of native rum.

But in 1917, almost overnight, all this was changed. The Danish flag was lowered and the Stars and Stripes hoisted to the roar of warships' guns. The twenty-six thousand inhabitants of the island were transferred from one sovereignty to another as so many cattle might change hands. It did not take them long to discover the difference between the kindly, paternal, easy-going rule of Copenhagen and the supercharged methods introduced by Washington. A throng of hustling Americans descended upon the Virgins. According to their ideas, everything that had been done during two hundred years of Danish rule was wrong. The towns, which had always been scrupulously clean, must be sanitized and renovated. The system of government must be overhauled, for the islanders were no longer subjects but citizens. More efficient methods must be employed in agriculture and industry. The natives must be scrubbed and vaccinated and properly clad and educated and ameliorated generally. That the natives had no desire to be ameliorated made no difference. They ought to thank their lucky stars that they had been adopted by Uncle Sam.



Not satisfied with overturning the customs, habits, and traditions of the islanders, we proceeded to deprive them of such small measure of prosperity as they enjoyed by extending the National Prohibition Act to the islands and forbidding the manufacture of rum, which had been one of their principal economic mainstays for centuries. Now that the Virgins belonged to the Land of the Free a native who wanted a drink of rum had to get it surreptitiously. The jubilation over annexation was of short duration. Soon smiles gave way to surliness, cheerfulness to discontent, but there were no open manifestations of dissatisfaction, for the Navy was in command and ruled with a firm hand.

But in a colony where there were so many jobs for deserving politicians it was not to be expected that the Navy would be permitted to run things for long. In 1931 the islands were transferred from the jurisdiction of the Navy Department to that of the Interior Department, and the naval governor was superseded by a civil one—a kindly old college professor from Pennsylvania, who, though short on practical experience, was long on idealism. Meanwhile the price of sugar had dropped so low that there was almost no margin of profit left to the industry, so when the natives, goaded by American labor agitators, struck for higher wages, many of the sugar mills closed down.

With the advent of the Roosevelt administration the New Deal was introduced into the islands. A horde of teachers, sanitary engineers, agricultural and economic experts, advisers of various kinds poured down from Washington. Most of them were totally ignorant of

tropical conditions and needs. Came too emissaries of labor organizations to stir up discontent and dissension. The colony was virtually turned over, lock, stock, and barrel, to the reformers and uplifters, who proceeded to convert it into a laboratory for political and economic experiments—with the natives as the victims. Being politically inarticulate—for, though citizens of the United States, they have no vote—the natives were helpless to offer opposition.

A government-controlled concern known as the Virgin Islands Company was incorporated to carry out the economic rehabilitation of the islands. Its program included, among other things, building a tourist hotel and an office building in Saint Thomas, the erection of modern sugar factories and rum distilleries in Saint Croix, and intensive cultivation of bay trees in Saint John. For the fiscal year ending in 1934 nearly two million dollars of P.W.A. funds were spent in the islands.

The New Dealers led the blacks to believe that the millennium was at hand. Despite their glowing promises, however, there was little improvement. To further complicate matters, a political feud between a cabinet officer and a United States Senator in far-away Washington had its repercussion in the islands. A local sheet, *The Emancipator*, helped to stir up trouble by violently attacking the administration. Natives began to appear in the streets of Saint Thomas carrying machetes, those keen-bladed, two-foot-long knives which are equally effective as agricultural implements and as weapons. There were strikes, anti-government demonstrations, riots, even threats of rebellion. But, the Senate having

refused to pass a bill providing for the organization of a white constabulary, the governor was powerless to enforce order. The situation was rapidly getting out of hand when a United States revenue cutter, tearing down from Norfolk under forced draught, entered the harbor of Saint Thomas and dropped anchor off the town. At sight of the long guns peering shoreward the whites gave a sigh of relief and the blacks promptly quieted down.

Our naval strategists assert that the Virgin Islands are an essential part of our national defence, that they ensure the safety of the Canal and the trade routes in the Caribbean. If that is so the Navy should be sent back to govern them. For what the natives need is less mollycoddling and a firmer hand. We should give the colony—insular territory, if you prefer the term—the sort of government that Britain and France and Holland give their West Indian possessions. We should create a white constabulary along the lines of those which our marines organized in Haiti and the Dominican Republic or those which we now have in many of our states. We should enact anti-sedition laws and see that they are enforced. We should replace the amateurs in charge of the Virgin Islands Company with experienced, hard-headed business men. We should oust the whole crew of theorists and idealists and reformers and professional office-holders, replace them with men who are familiar with tropical conditions and peoples, and give the islands a colonial rule free from interference either by altruists or by politicians. If we do not do

this, nothing is more certain than that sooner or later we shall have a rebellion on our hands.

The colored man who drove me about Saint Thomas was not the good-natured, smiling darkey one finds in most of the West Indian islands.

"What's the matter, boy?" I asked at length, irritated by the fellow's surliness. "You seem to have a grouch on."

"Sare," he said sullenly, in his half-Negro, half-English accent, "we don't like Hamericans. We was getting along well enough until you folks come down here and turned things topside down. Why don't you go 'ome and leave us alone?"

## VIII

### DOWN THE CARIBBEES

AN AMERICAN woman, a passenger on a cruise boat anchored for a few days in the Golden Horn, asked Sir Edwin Pears, the famous historian of the Ottoman Empire, how long it would take her to see Constantinople.

"I really can't say, madam," replied Sir Edwin. "You see, I have lived here only forty years."

That is the trouble with gadding about the world; you never have enough time to see more than a fraction of the things you would like to see or ought to see. This is particularly true in flying down the Caribbees, that eight-hundred-mile-long chain and green and storied islands which stretch from Porto Rico to the coast of South America like a row of stepping-stones.

For the planes stop at only a few of the islands, not always the most beautiful or interesting ones, and even these stops are too brief to permit of the passengers seeing much more of them than they would in a "travel short" on the motion picture screen. It was "How d'ye do?" "All aboard!" and "Good-bye!" at island after island. Like thumbing through a book filled with fascinating illustrations without having the time to pause and examine them. I was constantly irritated by the realization of how much I was missing. My only con-

solation was that to see all of the West Indies, even superficially, would take the better part of a lifetime.

The purser hands you a chart and with its aid you are able to identify the specks of green which stud the bright blue sea far below: Saint Martin, smaller than Staten Island yet with a divided sovereignty, for one-half is ruled by Holland, the other by France; Saba, a Dutch colony, where "the Ladder," of eight hundred stone steps, leads from the harbor's edge up to the capital, which is known, perversely enough, as "The Bottom"; Saint Eustatius, likewise Dutch and once one of the richest spots on earth, though it lost its prosperity almost overnight as a result of a British admiral's resentment when the governor saluted an American privateer; Barbuda, whose planters employed eugenic methods to improve the quality of their slaves by establishing a human stud farm, with Negro bucks and wenches instead of stallions and mares; Saint Christopher, where Captain John Smith, who married Pocahontas later on, encountered hurricanes which he naïvely described as "overgrowne stormes"; Nevis, once as fashionable a resort as Palm Beach or Monte Carlo, where Alexander Hamilton was born and the future hero of Trafalgar—Captain Horatio Nelson then—was married to the Widow Nisbet; Montserrat, overshadowed by an active volcano, whose Negroes bear Irish names and speak with an Irish brogue; and, at five o'clock in the afternoon, Antigua, where the plane stops for the night.

The capital of Antigua is Saint John, which is likewise the seat of government of the Leeward Islands. Its landlocked harbor is too shallow to permit the en-

trance of large ships, which lie several miles out and send their passengers ashore in tenders, but that makes no difference to the planes, which land at the foot of the town.

Saint John is a hot, drowsy little place, with a very Victorian Government House set in a park, a cricket field, a few substantial buildings, some pleasant old-fashioned homes, and a thick fringe of ramshackle Negro dwellings apparently constructed from any odds-and-ends that were at hand. The Negroes refuse to spruce up their houses because every improvement means increased taxation, which is already too burdensome for comfort.

The most conspicuous building in the town is the Anglican church, which is interesting because of its construction. When the church was seriously damaged by an earthquake, and the members of a wedding party narrowly escaped death from falling débris, its stone exterior was rebuilt, but, as a precaution against future earthquakes, a wooden church was built within the stone one. Outside the town there is little to see save some large plantations, rather run down; a petrified forest—there are several much better ones in the United States; and English Harbor, where Lord Nelson refitted his ships before setting out on the historic pursuit of Admiral Villeneuve's fleet which ended at Trafalgar.

One wanting a cheap and restful holiday could hardly make a better choice than Antigua, for living is incredibly cheap, it has a hot but not oppressive climate, its people are courteous and hospitable to strangers, its

bathing beaches are as fine as any in the West Indies—though bathers must beware of sharks—there is splendid deep-sea fishing, and in the interior are numerous deer and great flocks of wild pigeons. True, there is not much in the way of entertainment, barring the Saturday afternoon cricket matches and an occasional cinema. I was in Saint John on Good Friday, and before the local cinema house was displayed a large sign: "Special showing of 'The Crucifixion.' Don't miss this treat!"

My suitcase balanced precariously on the head of a Negro who spoke English with a pronounced cockney accent, I made my way up the sleepy main street to the town's only hotel, a small place but surprisingly comfortable and homelike. It was furnished largely with old English mahogany, inherited by the proprietress from her plantation-owning ancestors. Some of the pieces, superbly carved and with the original brass, should have been in a museum. I might mention in passing that the remoter islands of the British West Indies are treasure houses of antiques, for the early settlers, usually people of good family and some means, brought their household belongings out with them from England. It is astonishing that this almost virgin field should so long have escaped the attention of dealers and collectors.

Saint John has only one newspaper, *The Magnet*, but it is an enterprising sheet, for before I had had time to unpack my bag a servant informed me that a reporter was waiting downstairs to interview me. He was a Negro and had never been off the island, but he possessed a vocabulary of multisyllabic, sesquipedalian words which would have amazed and delighted Mr.



Vizetelly. I gathered that he had a grudge against King George, for he introduced himself as "a professional agitator" and a disciple of the anti-British and very troublesome Marcus Garvey.

In a place as small and far from the beaten paths of travel as Saint John visitors from the outside world are welcomed eagerly, and within an hour of my arrival I was waited upon by a delegation of citizens who bore me off to the club for dinner. The atmosphere of the club, if not the architecture, was that of Piccadilly. There was the same capacious armchairs covered with worn and shabby leather; the same portraits of King George and King Edward and Queen Victoria; faded photographs of famous cricketers and Derby winners such as you find wherever Englishmen forgather. On the long table in the reading-room were two-months-old copies of the *Times*, the *Illustrated London News*, the *Sphere*, the *Sporting and Dramatic News*, the *Spectator*. But on the pegs in the cloak-room were pipe-clayed helmets instead of bowlers and glossy toppers; the men sipping swizzles at the long bar wore the boots and breeches or the white linen garments of colonial planters. Most of the members, I gathered, were retired army or naval officers who had settled in Antigua because of its friendly climate and because their half-pay will go farther there than almost anywhere else in the world.

My hosts made me comfortable in a cane long-chair, gave me an excellent native cigar, placed at my elbow an enormous planter's punch—one of the most insidiously potent drinks in the *Bartender's Guide*—and proceeded

to bombard me with questions as to what was happening in the outside world. In ten minutes, word of a new arrival having spread, half the membership of the club must have been gathered about me. There was something pathetic in the eagerness with which these exiles begged for the bits of gossip which they did not find in the infrequent letters from home or in the English papers. They wanted to hear about the new hotels going up in Park Lane and Oxford Street, the disappearance of old landmarks such as the Cecil and Prince's, the latest plays and books and song-hits. One of them had not been home since Edna May was the rage of London in *The Belle of New York*. How recently had I been in England? Were things beginning to pick up? What about this Communist business? "How stands the old Lord Warden? Are Dover's cliffs still white?"

One of the minor discomforts incident to flying in the Caribbean is that the planes take off at daybreak, which makes it necessary to bathe, dress, and breakfast while it is still dark. But this minor inconvenience is amply compensated for by the glory of the tropic dawn, when the sun, an enormous golden pomegranate, suddenly bursts through the curtain of somber, sullen horizon-clouds in a fanfare of orange, pink, vermilion and scarlet.

The five-hundred-mile flight from Antigua to Trinidad is broken by calls at Pointe-à-Pitre, Guadeloupe; Fort-de-France, Martinique; and Port Castries, Saint Lucia. All of them have historic and scenic attractions, but it may be questioned whether they are worth a stop-over if time is a consideration, for vastly more fascinating places await the traveler farther on.

A narrow channel, the Rivière Salée, divides the French colony of Guadeloupe into two islands: Guadeloupe, which is mountainous; Grande Terre, which is low and flat. The capital, Basse-Terre, is, despite its name, upon the former island; Pointe-à-Pitre, the *chef-lieu* and commercial center of the colony, is on the latter.

Even the casual observer cannot fail to note that the French West Indian colonies have a more prosperous atmosphere than the British. They are by no means as clean and well kept, but the buildings are more substantial, the natives are better dressed, the towns are busier. This is due to several reasons: to a larger proportion of whites, to less burdensome taxation, to a closer relation between the colonies and the home government—the French colonies send representatives to the Chamber of Deputies—and to the French genius for getting along with the natives. In dealing with subject peoples the British never forget, or let it be forgotten, that they are the masters, whereas the French treat the natives as partners rather than vassals.

We obtained a bird's-eye view of Dominica, whose mile-high mountains are the loftiest in the Caribbees, and which is said to be the most beautiful of the Lesser Antilles, the amazing luxuriance of its vegetation being due to excessive rains. I should have liked to stop at Dominica, if only to confirm the fantastic stories I had heard about an American planter whose fame, or, rather, notoriety, has spread throughout the islands. Of a distinguished family, a graduate of a famous university, widely traveled and highly cultured, he lives in seigniorial luxury

on a great plantation where he maintains a seraglio of Negresses, mulattoes, quadroons, and octoroons. At dinner, served on silver plate by liveried servants, he sits at the head of a long table flanked by his chocolate, *café-au-lait*, and tea-colored concubines, all gowned in the latest Paris fashion. The conversation, I am told, is that of cultured folk the world over, but whenever one of the damsels makes a remark which displeases her master he flicks her across her bare shoulders with the blacksnake whip which he keeps constantly beside him. Dreadful stories of how, overcome by sudden rages, he has had the girls stripped and flogged into insensibility are current on the island. I do not know how much truth there is in these revolting tales, but I am informed that on several occasions he has been expelled by the British authorities, though they have always permitted him to return.

Before the purple peaks of Dominica had sunk from view a strong odor of sulphur became noticeable in the cabin of the plane. Shortly we discovered its source, for from the northern extremity of the next island, Martinique, a great mountain, dark, ominous, sinister, reared itself more than four thousand feet into the hot blue sky. From its cloud-wreathed summit rose a column of smoke and steam. Scarifying its flanks were black rivers of hardened lava which gradually expanded until they covered the shores of the bay nestling at its foot. *Morne Pelée!*

More than a third of a century has passed since the world was horrified by the news of the eruption of Mount Pelée, the annihilation of the colonial capital, Saint-Pierre, and the loss of forty thousand lives. It was one of the most appalling catastrophes in history. Yet the

lava was scarcely cold ere the survivors began drifting back to build new homes under the shadow of the quiescent but still smoking mountain and to plant crops in the rich decomposing ash which covers the whole northern end of the island with a thick black blanket.

Before the great eruption Martinique was celebrated as the richest, the gayest, and the wickedest of the Lesser Antilles. It is no longer any of those, yet the measure of recovery it has achieved speaks volumes for the optimism, courage, and energy of its inhabitants. The new capital, Fort-de-France, is one of the busiest ports in the Antilles; the government buildings, shops, and residences are far superior to those in most of the neighboring British colonies; and the people appear more prosperous.

In Fort-de-France, in the center of a little *place* surrounded by stately royal palms, stands a statue in gleaming marble of Martinique's most celebrated daughter, Marie Joséphe-Rose Tascher de la Pagerie, known to the world as Josephine, Empress of the French. Slender and graceful, in the clinging, high-waisted gown of her time, she gazes wistfully toward Trois-Ilets, across the bay, where she was born. Nowhere in the world is there a statue more poignant with tragedy. Studying the lovely features of this Creole girl, who by a series of fortuitous circumstances rose from an impoverished home on an obscure West Indian island to an imperial throne, one wonders if, in the days of her sorrow, when the glory was past and she was living alone at Malmaison, her thoughts did not often hark back to the happy, carefree days of her girlhood on Martinique.

The plane's next call is at Port Castries, capital of the

British colony of Saint Lucia and the only town of any importance on that island. Pickaninnies in homemade boats the size of bathtubs swarmed about the clipper as it rested on the surface of the harbor, begging for coins in a curious Franco-English patois, and, when coppers and pieces of silver were tossed into the aquamarine waters, retrieving them before they could reach the bottom.

The slopes above its magnificent landlocked harbor covered with massive fortifications, Port Castries was long considered the Gibraltar of the West Indies. Here Admiral Rodney lay in wait with his fleet while the French were assembling a great armada a few miles away in the harbor of Fort-de-France, and from here the bluff English sailor set sail in April, 1782, for the great sea-battle off Dominica which gave Britain naval supremacy in the West.

There are no ports of call between Saint Lucia and Trinidad, but the plane soars over numberless islands with familiar names at which I longed to stop: Saint Vincent, loveliest of the Windwards yet ignored by tourist boats, whence the *Bounty* started on the voyage to the South Seas which was to culminate in the famous mutiny; Mustique, Cannouan, Carriacou, Battowia, and other of the strangely named Grenadines; Grenada itself, where the nutmeg grows and which gave its name to the pink fruit-syrup used for sweetening cocktails; Tobago, which is now generally identified with the island described by Defoe in *Robinson Crusoe*, though there are those who maintain that the scene of that famous yarn was laid on the island of Juan Fernandez, on the

other side of South America; and, shortly before noon, Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad.

Trinidad is really a part of South America, for it is separated from the Venezuelan coast by two narrow straits, the Dragon's Mouth and the Serpent's Mouth, the former only seven miles across, and its physiography, its flora, its fauna are all those of the great antipodean continent. The second largest of the British West Indian islands, it is by far the most prosperous, partly because of its wealth in petroleum and asphalt, partly because it is the entrepôt for all that portion of Venezuela tapped by the Orinoco, which penetrates the hinterland for fifteen hundred miles. At Port of Spain stern-wheel river steamers take aboard passengers and cargoes for Ciudad Bolívar, where navigation is interrupted by rapids. Here they are transhipped to smaller steamers, eventually reaching their destinations in the far interior by canoe or mule-train.

Though only about the size of Long Island, Trinidad is enormously rich in all the agricultural products of the tropics, in timber, cabinet and dye woods, in medicinal plants, spices, and gums. From its bully-trees comes the balata juice used in coating wires; from the dried berries of its pimento trees is made the allspice used in cooking; from the dried roots of a climbing plant of the smilax family is produced sarsaparilla; the chicle made by boiling down the milky juice of the sapodilla is the basic substance used in the manufacture of chewing-gum.

Trinidad has had a checkered history, having been for various periods under the flags of Spain, Holland, France, and Britain. Originally a Spanish possession by virtue of

its discovery by Columbus, it was taken in 1595 by Sir Walter Raleigh when that adventurous and gallant gentleman was in quest of El Dorado, but on that occasion the English did not hold it for long. During the seventeenth century it was captured once by the Dutch and twice by the French, but each time reverted to the Dons, who were finally ousted by the British in 1797.

Port of Spain, with some sixty thousand inhabitants, is a bustling, progressive and cosmopolitan town, for, in addition to the English, its population includes French, Spaniards, Portuguese, Venezuelans, Chinese, Negroes from the other West Indian islands, and great numbers of East Indians, who, originally brought out as indentured field laborers, have in many cases become prosperous merchants, planters, and artisans. So numerous are these in some of the rural districts that it is hard to believe one is not in India, for the men cling to their turbans and tight-fitting jodhpurs, the women to their colorful native costumes; there are Hindu temples in many of the towns, and in the fields graze hump-backed zebu cattle.

As might be expected of a British town, Port of Spain is immaculately clean. All its streets are paved, which is not surprising when one remembers that asphalt is the principal product of the island; its traffic is controlled by native police very smart in their white helmets and jackets; it has a \$200,000 movie house, built by East Indian merchants, which, having an artificial cooling system, is the most comfortable place in town. Port of Spain sees the new films almost as soon as Broadway, for they are brought down from the States by plane.



The public buildings, though substantial, are unattractive, being built of red brick in the jejune style which prevailed when Victoria was queen. Instead of the low, thick-walled, patioed houses, so admirably adapted to the tropics, which one finds in the Latin-American countries, the dwellings are of wood, their architectural fussiness and their little front-yard gardens reminiscent of Brighton and Eastbourne. But they are painted in every color of the spectrum and *jalousies* protect their porches from the sun, so that they suggest prim old Englishwomen who in their dress make grudging concession to the climatic conditions of the hot lands.

The United States is fortunate in having as its representative in Port of Spain a consul of the old school. For, though not old, Captain Alfredo Demorest, born of American parents in South America, feels it incumbent on him to take every visiting American under his wing and make his stay in Trinidad enjoyable and interesting. Thanks to him, and to the hospitality of his friends, I received so many invitations that breakfast was the only meal I ate alone.

Do you like good cooking? Then go to Port of Spain. And eat at the Union Club if you can get a visitor's card or an invitation. The tables are set on a gallery overlooking a garden filled with tropical trees and plants, amid which roam pink-legged flamingoes and the little native deer, scarcely larger than greyhounds. The club is famous throughout the Antilles for its turtle soup, made from the monster sea-turtles caught along the coast and flavored not with ordinary cooking sherry but with fine old amontillado brought years ago from Spain. It is the

sort of dish the late Diamond Jim Brady would have reveled in. Then there are the small but delicious native oysters, vastly better than the Olympics of Puget Sound, lobster, shrimp, land-crab, a deep-sea fish known as grouper, together with venison and all kinds of wild fowl in season. Such a meal, preceded by two or three gin swizzles, accompanied by a vintage claret, Burgundy, or hock, and followed by a glass of port wine brought over in the days of sailing ships, remains a white milestone on the road of gastronomical memories.

On the landward side of the city, where the heavily wooded mountains sweep down almost to the edges of the town, is Port of Spain's most attractive feature—the broad, level, grass-covered Savanna, which, if in India, would be called a maidan. Encircling its two hundred acres of turf is a broad drive shaded by poincianas aflame with vermilion blossoms. Overlooking the Savanna on three sides are the mansions of the wealthy, the more modest homes of the well-to-do, the residences of the Catholic archbishop and the Anglican bishop, and the long, low, rambling buildings of the Queen's Park Hotel. The fourth side is occupied by Government House, a spacious and comfortable if not imposing building which might have been transplanted bodily from India, set in its own park, and the beautiful Public Gardens. To the people of Trinidad the Savanna is a park, a parade ground, a race course, a playing field, and a pasture combined. Here are held military reviews, horse races, polo games, cricket and football matches; here herds of sheep are turned out to graze and keep the grass more closely cropped than could be done with lawnmowers;

and here, toward evening, comes the cosmopolitan society of Port of Spain, in motor cars, in carriages, on horseback and afoot, to enjoy the cool breezes after the stifling heat of the town.

I have seen nearly all of the great botanical gardens in the world, but, save at Buitenzorg in Java, I know of none which for variety and charm can compare with those at Port of Spain. They contain nearly every known variety of palm, great clumps of timber bamboo whose stalks are sometimes a foot in diameter, acacias so laden with yellow blooms that they look like golden fountains, a gigantic specimen of the silk-cotton tree, held sacred by the West Indian Negroes, magenta, deep red, scarlet, pink, terra cotta, yellow, and white bougainvillea; tree-ferns half a hundred feet in height, surmounted by clumps of swaying fronds which suggest the feathered bonnets of savage warriors; the traveler's tree, whose trunk, if pierced with a knife, will yield pure drinking water; and the glorious immortelle, its branches tufted with blossoms of an indescribable shade between flame color and watermelon-pink, which many maintain is the most beautiful tree of the tropics.

To see the vegetation of Trinidad at its best, however, one must visit the forests of the interior. Here the great trees are incrustated with parasites and epiphytes—orchids in many colors, begonias, cacti, ferns, lilylike plants of the arum family. Festooned from tree to tree are flowering creepers of many kinds, and hanging from the branches like great ropes are lianas as thick as a man's arm.

Trinidad's chief source of wealth is not in its mag-

nificent forests, however, but in a black and evil-smelling swamp at La Brea, forty miles from Port of Spain and a mile or so from Brighton on the Gulf of Paria. This is the famous Pitch Lake—misnamed, for it is not a lake and it does not contain pitch but asphalt. Circular in form, with an area of only about a hundred acres, it is an expanse of what looks like sun-dried black mud, cracked by the heat, dotted with patches of coarse grass and pools of stagnant water. Its surface is hard enough to support the weight of a light railway and the hand-cars which run over it, but if you stand in one spot for long you will find yourself gradually sinking. The asphalt is chopped out with picks and shovels by gangs of Negroes, who break it into rough lumps which resemble and are nearly as hard as brown coal. Though these do not stick to the fingers in handling, when piled up they gradually run together, so that the asphalt has to be packed in barrels, as it was found unsafe to ship it loose in the holds of steamers. The excavations rapidly fill up, and the supply seems inexhaustible, for, though borings have been made for hundreds of feet, they have never reached the bottom of the deposit.

The evening before my departure from Trinidad I dined at Government House with the Governor and Lady Hollis. Fortunately I had brought along a black dinner jacket, for at Government House white garments are not *de rigueur*, no matter how great the heat—and Trinidad can be both very hot and very humid. The servants were much more sensibly clad than the guests, for their silver-buttoned tail-coats of blue-and-white

striped ticking were cool even though they looked as though they had been made from mattress covers.

Sir Claud Hollis is the type of administrator unknown in our own colonial possessions. Educated with a colonial career in view and starting in some obscure, God-forsaken outpost of empire, he has worked his way rung by rung up the ladder of the service, attaining his present position not by political pull but by sheer merit. The British, you see, give their colonial posts, like their diplomatic ones, to men who are fitted by training and experience to hold them, whereas we hand them out as rewards to deserving politicians.

The dinner concluded with the inevitable toast, drunk in port and standing, to "The King, God bless him!" Afterward, our cigars alight, the Governor conducted me through the moonlit gardens to the great tree beneath which Charles Kingsley, realizing his lifelong dream of visiting the West Indies, wrote *At Last*.

## IX

### OUTPOST OF EMPIRE

BACK in the eighties, long before it became a crime for citizens of the Land of the Free to have gold in their possession, an Irish immigrant, lured to the New World by tales of its fabulous wealth, landed at Castle Garden. Proceeding uptown, his meager possessions under his arm, his eye was caught by a glitter between the paving-stones. A five-dollar gold piece. He halted, automatically bent to pick it up, hesitated, straightened up, shrugged his shoulders, and went on, remarking disdainfully: "Naw. Oi'll wait till Oi git to the pile."

Some hundreds of years before, an Englishman, Sir Walter Raleigh, had done what amounted to the same thing. Skirting the northern coast of South America in quest of the mythical El Dorado, he had landed on the shores of what is now British Guiana. But, because gold was not as plentiful as he had expected, he hoisted anchor and sailed on, up the Orinoco, still looking for "the pile." Had he had more patience and perseverance he would have found gold in considerable quantities, and likewise diamonds, to say nothing of another mineral, bauxite, of which he had never heard, though it is of more value to mankind than all the gold and diamonds of the Guianas, for it is the principal source of aluminum.

From the days of the earliest conquistadors the region between the mouths of the Orinoco and the Amazon was believed to be the realm of El Dorado, the Gilded King, who was reputed to cover himself with pure gold and to wash it from him in the sacred lake of "Manoa." This fantastic tale was presumably invented by the coastal Indians to account for the quills of gold which to this day come down the rivers, in the course of many exchanges, from far interior sources which no white prospector has ever been able to find. Raleigh, already under sentence of death, had been reprieved by James I on the strength of the adventurer's assurance that he could discover El Dorado's fabulous kingdom. When, abandoning the quest as hopeless, he returned to England, he paid the penalty of failure beneath the headsman's axe.

The colony of British Guiana is Great Britain's only foothold on the continent of South America. A fair-sized foothold, however, for it is larger than England, Scotland, and Wales combined. The first settlements along the "Danger Coast" were made by the Dutch toward the end of the sixteenth century. The country was occupied by the English in 1781, but in the following year was recovered for the Dutch by their French allies. Several times more it changed hands, as the European possessions in the Americas had a habit of doing, but in the settlement following the close of the Napoleonic wars it was awarded to Britain.

It is about four hundred miles from Port of Spain to Georgetown, the capital of British Guiana, and the Pan-American planes cover the distance in four hours flat, which is about one-tenth of the time it takes to make the

journey by steamer. Long before sighting the Guiana coast one is struck by the change in the color of the sea, whose glorious cerulean gradually becomes a muddy brown. This is due to the enormous volumes of water debouching from South America's two great rivers, the Orinoco and the Amazon, whose currents affect the speed of ocean liners even when fifty miles from land.

That portion of British Guiana seen from the plane looks like a vast green tartan plaided with brown, the green being the plantations and estates, the brown cross-bars the dikes and canals which keep the sea from inundating these lush, low-lying lands. This alluvial and amazingly fertile coastal plain, much of it below the level of the sea, is nowhere more than fifty miles in width, yet it includes nearly the whole of the planted lands, for only about one-half of one per cent of the entire area of the colony is under cultivation. Behind this coastal zone is a somewhat higher plateau, a region of broad savannas and sand dunes. And beyond this, in turn, is the "high bush," its impenetrable and malarial jungles broken by ranges of lofty mountains which reach their apogee in Roraima, whose steep slopes climb 8,635 feet into the blue.

The planes land at a float moored in the Demerara River, whence the passengers and mails are conveyed by tender to Georgetown. Awaiting me on the float was the Pan-American agent, Mr. Walcott, who is one of the colony's prominent citizens and the owner of one of its finest plantations.

"I'm taking you out to the races," he informed me as soon as we had shaken hands. "The governor has invited



us to sit in his box. We've barely time to reach the course before he arrives."

"But I can't appear in respectable society until I have had a shave and a bath and changed my clothes," I protested. "I was up at daybreak and I look like a tramp."

"We'll stop at the club long enough for you to brush up," he assured me. "And to have a drink. But we mustn't be late. This is the big social event of the year—the colony's Ascot Week—and His Excellency is coming in state. We must be there when he arrives."

A considerable proportion of Georgetown's population was at the races, crowded ten deep along the rail, lined up before the betting booths, or packed in the grandstand, on whose corrugated-iron roof the tropic sun beat down pitilessly, so that the temperature within was at oven heat. It was a cosmopolitan and colorful assemblage: English planters in white linen and solar topees; Englishwomen in summer gowns and broad-brimmed garden hats; dark-skinned Venezuelans and Brazilians chattering excitedly in Spanish and Portuguese; bearded, beturbaned, dignified East Indians; troopers of the local constabulary, very smart in their white tunics, blue breeches, and scarlet caps; oily, paunchy Parsee bankers and merchants; bland, smiling, prosperous-looking Chinese and Japanese; and Negroes of every skin tint from anthracite to "high yaller," dressed in the Negro's conception of the latest thing in English sporting fashions, with gaudy cricket-club hatbands and neckties which could be heard a mile away.

We reached the course just in time to witness the arrival of His Britannic Majesty's representative. Escorted

by a detachment of red-capped, white-gauntleted Negro lancers, with a mounted equerry riding on either hand, the Governor and Lady Denham drove down the course, amid a storm of cheers, in a Model T Ford. The cortège halted before the grandstand and Their Excellencies descended while the troopers presented arms, the spectators stood at attention and the band played "God Save the King." It was all very ceremonious and picturesque and characteristically British, though it struck me that the cavalry escort, the liveried servants, the scarlet-coated trumpeter, and the governor's white top-hat, taken in conjunction with the small and antiquated car, smacked of a forty-dollar saddle on a twenty-dollar horse.

The governor's box, like the royal box at Epsom Downs, was on top of the grandstand, the wooden stairway leading to it guarded by sentries. Exposed to the direct rays of the tropic sun, it was as hot as the hinges of Hades. I promptly forgot about the heat, however, when I caught sight of a long buffet loaded with sandwiches, pâtés, hors d'œuvres, cakes, and an imposing array of bottles, for I had had nothing to eat since five o'clock that morning.

Sir Edward Denham, like his colleague in Trinidad, is a career man, a professional colonial administrator who was trained for his job. One of the Indian servants having supplied me with a tall iced drink and a plate of sandwiches, the governor launched into a discussion of his pet project—a government-subsidized air service from Georgetown to the Kaietur Fall, which is one of the great sights of the world.

The fall, which is far in the interior and extremely difficult of access, is on the Potaro, which hurls itself from a tableland into a deep valley more than eight hundred feet below. For the first 714 feet the water falls in a perpendicular column, which varies in width from 120 feet to 400 feet, according to the season, whereas the falls at Niagara, though only 167 feet high, are four thousand feet in width.

To visit the Kaietur Fall at present requires about ten days, for small power boats and canoes are the only available means of transportation, whereas the trip from Georgetown to the fall and return could be made in half a day by plane. The establishment of an air service would undoubtedly attract a much larger number of tourists to British Guiana, which is now rarely visited by cruise boats; but, unfortunately, the tourist season is in winter, which is Guiana's dry season, when the volume of water going over the fall is greatly diminished.

As in so many South American cities, the streets of Georgetown are of boulevard width, shaded by magnificent trees—palms, mahogany, and the beautiful flamboyant—with broad promenades, planted with tropical shrubs and flowers, running down the center. The Sea Wall Promenade, a mile and a half long, is the coolest place in town and much frequented in the late afternoon, for in Georgetown all business ceases at four o'clock by statute.

With the exception of the unimaginative and stodgy structures which house the various government departments, all the buildings are of wood, raised a few feet above the ground on brick piers, because water is found

too near the surface to permit of cellars. Though in a country as rich in timber as Guiana wooden buildings can be put up cheaply, they are costly to maintain, for they are constantly in need of repair owing to the heat, the humidity, and the depredations of ants. One coming from northern latitudes is struck by the absence of chimneys, and, consequently, of smoke; stoves and open fireplaces are never needed—Georgetown is only eight degrees from the Equator—and cooking is done by electricity or gas. Standing in close proximity to every house is a large and unsightly metal tank for the storage of rain-water, for there are no wells in Georgetown and the river water is unfit to drink. All of the houses are surrounded by gorgeous gardens, though many of them do not contain a single flower. Their wealth of color is due to the crotons, of many varieties, whose foliage is as vivid and variegated as any flowers. But—and this is true throughout the tropics—there are no lawns, for grass quickly withers and dies under the tropic sun.

According to American ideas the houses are sparsely furnished and rather barren-looking; but upholstered furniture has no place in a land where the mercury frequently climbs to 100 in the shade, where walls, books, and clothing become green with mildew as a result of the excessive dampness, and where chairs and sofas and tables are sometimes ruined by ants in a single night. For the same reason rugs and carpets are rarely seen in the tropics, and this is also true of window curtains; the wooden jalousies—we call them Venetian blinds—keep out the direct rays of the sun while admitting air and light. In

most houses, however, all doors and windows are closed in the early morning so as to keep out the heat.

It is claimed that the Botanical Gardens in Georgetown contain the finest collection of palms to be found in the tropics. This may or may not be the case, but they do contain an extraordinary variety of strange trees and plants. Even those who have only the most perfunctory knowledge of botany and horticulture could hardly fail to find here something of interest. Here are magnificent specimens of the immortelle tree, which loses its leaves at the beginning of the cool weather—about as cool as midsummer in the southern United States—and shortly thereafter bursts into bloom, its boughs so thickly covered with vermilion blossoms that they look like enormous branches of pinkish red coral; the Rangoon creeper, whose flowers change their color from day to day as certain Oriental perfumes change their scents; the Peruvian cactus, with blossoms the size of dinner plates; the Chinese parasol flower; the Mexican cigar flower; the African tree violet; orchids in such profusion and variety as to make the costly blooms displayed in florists' windows at home seem commonplace; and, most notable of all, the giant water-lily, the *Victoria Regia*, one of whose enormous pads, frequently five feet across, will support the weight of a forty-pound child.

In the gardens is a lagoon containing a herd of sea-cows, or manatees. These curious and repulsive-looking mammals, often a dozen feet in length, whose deeply sunken eyes, knoblike noses, bristle-covered lips, and hairless hides give them a certain hideous resemblance to human beings, undoubtedly provided the early explorers

with the basis for their tales of mermaids and sirens. I can well understand how this might be so, for once, on the coast of Palestine, in a sea-pool off the Ladder of Tyre, I saw an Oriental member of the Sirenia order which, until it swam away, my companions and I took for the decomposing body of a drowned man.

British Guiana is almost the only country in the world where all the great racial divisions of mankind are largely represented in the population: white, red, brown, yellow, and black men—Europeans, Indians, Hindus, Mongolians, and Negroes. The whites consist of English officials, merchants, and planters, a few French and Dutch, and a considerable number of Venezuelans and Brazilians. Of the Indian aborigines, squat, secretive, and savage, only about six thousand are left. Considerably more than a third of the 300,000 inhabitants of British Guiana are, curiously enough, East Indians, originally brought from India to work on the plantations but now a permanent element of the population. Likewise brought from the Far East as indentured laborers were large numbers of Chinese and smaller numbers of Japanese. With Oriental shrewdness they saved their pay, which they invested in land or business enterprises, so that most of the present generation are small planters or merchants, some of them extremely prosperous. The bulk of the population, however, consists of descendants of the Negro slaves who were imported from Africa in the days of the trade in "black ivory." Many of them escaped from their masters to find refuge in the jungles of the interior—the descendants of these fugitives being the Djukas, or "bush Negroes," who lead an isolated and semi-savage

existence in the "high bush," where they live very much as their ancestors lived in the jungles of West Africa. They have their own religion, their own gods, and their own language, the latter a curious vocabulary of African, Indian, Dutch, Portuguese, and Spanish words grafted onto a bastard English.

British Guiana has an inexhaustible supply of timber, for nearly nine-tenths of its total area of 90,000 square miles consists of forest. Here, and in the neighboring colony of Dutch Guiana, are the only known sources of the woods known as greenheart and purpleheart. The former, because of its extreme durability and its exemption from the attacks of ants and ship-worms, is much used in harbor works and shipbuilding. Purpleheart is employed in cabinet and inlay work, for, when polished, it takes on a rich plum color verging on crimson.

As I have remarked elsewhere, only about one half of one per cent of the total area of British Guiana is under cultivation, and this is along the coast, where the two chief products of the colony—sugar and rice—are grown. Demerara sugar before it has been refined—the "brown sugar" of our childhood—is, to my way of thinking, the most delicious product of the cane, with a flavor quite different from the cold sweetness of beet juice. Did your grandmother never give you a slice of buttered bread spread with old-fashioned brown sugar?

I had been told that the picturesque and lavish mode of life which prevailed on the plantations of the Old South and disappeared with the Civil War was still to be found, at least to some extent, on the great estates of British Guiana. So I was delighted when Mr. Walcott invited

me to visit him at "Hope," his seventeen-thousand-acre estate on the coast, twenty miles east of Georgetown. The house proved to be the plantation home of my imagination—a huge, rambling, two-story place, its high-ceilinged, airy rooms floored and paneled with rare tropical woods. Not even in the great houses of England have I ever seen finer mahogany or silver, for my host's ancestors came out to the Guianas in Cromwell's time and "Hope" has been in the possession of the family ever since.

We dressed for dinner, of course, though, so humid was the heat, my collar wilted almost before I could fasten it. My host and hostess were awaiting me at the bar, which was of scarlet lacquer with high stools of polished chromium and scarlet leather. In attendance were two Negro bartenders in white jackets with red collars. We might have been in the cocktail room of a Park Avenue penthouse. It was hard to believe that I was on a plantation in British Guiana, almost at the edge of the jungle and only a few degrees from the Line.

The favorite drink of the Guiana planters is a swizzle, made from gin or native rum. Each drink is made separately in a small glass pitcher and stirred with a "swizzle stick," never shaken. A properly concocted swizzle, I was told, should have a bead, and should be drunk before the froth has disappeared. In British Guiana it would be heresy to say so, but I must confess that I found the swizzle rather flat. It is all a matter of taste, of course, but I prefer a Daiquirí or a planter's punch.

Nowhere have I seen food cooked and served with such perfection as at "Hope." The silver was seventeenth



century English, and the beautifully wrought candelabra, the crested service plates and goblets, would have graced any museum in the world; the wines were of vintages of which the present generation knows only by hearsay; the air was kept in motion by a gently swinging punkah; the white-clad servants moved about on noiseless feet. But my enjoyment of what would otherwise have been a perfect meal was marred by the swarms of giant, man-eating mosquitoes, which droned about my head like squadrons of infinitesimal pursuit planes. They attacked every exposed portion of my anatomy; my neck, wrists, and ankles grew red and swollen; I had not known such acute discomfort since, as a boy, I had disturbed a nest of hornets. Noting my distress, my hostess signaled to the butler, who produced a long bag of green baize which he drew over my feet and legs and tied with a draw-string about my waist.

"This is the dry season, and we scarcely notice the mosquitoes," remarked Mrs. Walcott. "You should be here during the rains; then they are really bad."

"I suppose it is all a matter of comparison," I said dryly, slapping vainly at a mosquito which had sunk its proboscis in the back of my neck. "No doubt the gentlemen who ran the Spanish Inquisition cheered up their victims by telling them how lucky they were to be burned at the stake instead of being boiled in oil."

## X

### FRINGE OF SAVAGERY

FOR me waking is never a pleasure. The ideal life, in my opinion, would be one in which I never had to go to bed at all, for then I never would have to get up. So, when I was aroused shortly after three A.M. and told that I had just enough time to bathe, dress, breakfast, and reach Georgetown in time to catch the plane for Paramaribo, my enthusiasm over air travel suffered a temporary relapse. Yet I grudgingly realized that the plane must take off at the crack of dawn if it was to reach Belem, in Brazil, nearly eleven hundred miles away, before dark.

"The dawn comes up like thunder," wrote Kipling in "Mandalay," and when flying in the tropics you realize how accurate is the description. For the curtain of night rises to disclose an eastern horizon along which are piled in fantastic forms masses of ominously dark clouds. A violent storm, a hurricane perhaps, is apparently impending, and you wonder, a little anxiously, if it wouldn't be the part of wisdom to defer your trip until a more propitious day. But your anxiety proves to be without foundation, for suddenly, at one burst, comes the sun and before its brazen onset the threatening thunderheads melt away.

I wanted to go to Dutch Guiana—the Dutch them-

selves usually refer to it as Surinam—because I had always been fascinated by the name of its capital, Paramaribo. It was as intriguing as the names of certain other outlandish places—Samarkand, Khiva, Addis Ababa, Bulawayo, Pnom-Penh, Zamboanga, Katmandu—which I had traveled thousands of miles to see. And, were it not for Pan-American Airways, it would be almost as inaccessible as any of those, for it is off the routes of the mail steamers which serve the east and west coasts of South America and it is ignored even by the ubiquitous cruise boats whose operators are always advertising new and alluring ports of call.

Every one knows of the Dutch East Indies, of course, and a good many tourists on winter cruises to the Caribbean have been afforded a glimpse of Curaçao, the largest of Holland's West Indian possessions, but not many people realize that on the mainland of South America Queen Wilhelmina reigns over a colony more than four times the size of the Netherlands. And still fewer are aware of how this remote territory came into the possession of the Dutch or of the part it played in the history of our own country.

The region known until recently as Surinam consists of some 54,000 square miles of jungle, forest, and mountains between the Copenam and Maroni rivers. It was originally a part of British Guiana, but in 1667 the British government offered to cede it to Holland in exchange for the struggling Dutch colony of Nieuw Amsterdam at the mouth of the Hudson River. Because the soil and climate of the "Danger Coast," as this littoral was labeled on the old maps, were singularly adapted to the cultiva-

tion of sugar cane, the Dutch willingly assented to the trade, little dreaming that they were relinquishing for a patch of jungle what was to become the richest city in the world. But the shrewd burghers doubtless felt that they were making a good deal, as only forty-three years before they had purchased Manhattan Island from the Indians for a few bolts of bright cloth and a few sacks of glass beads valued at sixty guilders. It is interesting to speculate on the course of history if they had not traded Nieuw Amsterdam for Guiana. Quite possibly there would have been no American Revolution; perhaps New Yorkers might be speaking Dutch instead of English and using stamps bearing the portrait of Queen Wilhelmina and the legend "Nederlandisch Amerika."

Paramaribo is about twenty miles from the sea on the Surinam, here a tidal river nearly a mile in width and navigable for another hundred miles by vessels of shallow draught. With its canals and dikes and windmills, its tree-planted streets and spacious squares, its quaint gabled houses and red-and-white government buildings, the colonial capital is a characteristically Dutch town modified just enough to meet tropical conditions.

The focus of European life in Paramaribo is Government Square, a long green rectangle shaded by stately trees which are probably either mahogany or rosewood but which look like elms. At the top of the square stands a group of dignified and not unimposing government offices of red brick with white columns and trimmings. Diagonally opposite, set well back in a luxuriant garden, is the long, low Government House, the residence of the Dutch governor. Before it stands a statue of Queen

Wilhelmina, portrayed as a buxom girl in an 1898 gown. The fine old trees, the grassy common, the colonial architecture of the buildings, the order and tranquillity and meticulous neatness give to this part of the city a rather striking resemblance to a New England college town.

Opposite Government House is Paramaribo's leading hostelry, the Palace Hotel, which, though clean and comfortable, is by no means palatial. Nor is it particularly cheap, at least for one with American funds, as the rate of ten gulden a day *en pension* is equivalent at the present rate of exchange to nearly seven Roosevelt dollars.

The business quarter of the city is almost equally Dutch so far as its architecture is concerned. The buildings are set close together, with no dooryards or gardens, and all of them have the steep roofs, the pointed gables, the mullioned windows, and the brass-knocked doors of Holland. The more well-to-do Europeans live in the suburbs in simple but comfortable homes, with deep jalousied verandas and pleasant gardens, overlooking the coffee-colored Surinam. Though there are no pavements in Paramaribo, and no sewage system, the streets, of crushed shell and white sand, are immaculately clean. The dominant note, indeed, is cleanliness. It is a tropical Spotless Town.

In a half-hour's stroll one may hear a dozen tongues, for the population of Paramaribo is even more heterogeneous than that of Georgetown. Here East and West meet and mingle, for the population of the colony is about equally divided between East Indians and West

Indians with numerous other nationalities thrown in. In the space of time it takes to sip a glass of the local beer there will pass before you a fascinatingly diversified procession: rotund, rosy-faced Dutch officials, traders, and planters in starched white linen; sallow-faced Venezuelans and Brazilians; occasional Americans in helmets and riding breeches, most of them connected with Mr. Mellon's bauxite mines; Spanish and Portuguese Jews; now and then a Frenchman, in all likelihood an escaped convict from one of the penal hell-holes near Cayenne; Javanese and British East Indians, of whom there are more than fifty thousand, most of them employed as field laborers on the plantations; Chinese shopkeepers and truck-gardeners; less frequently a Japanese, Syrian, or Armenian bazaar-merchant; groups of chattering Djukas, as the bush Negroes are called, down from the hinterland to barter forest products for store goods and to take in the sights of the town; very occasionally a party of Carib or Arawak Indians, come by dugout canoes from the far interior, their nakedness sketchily covered with bits of sacking in compliance with police regulations; and, of course, the civilized Negroes who form slightly more than half of the colony's population, the men in patched trousers and ragged shirts, the women in voluminous dresses of flamboyantly patterned cottons and vivid bandanna turbans. A military touch is lent to the scene by the native constabulary, distinguished by round hats of varnished brown straw and rather slovenly uniforms of moss-gray linen; and the Dutch soldiers comprising the small garrison, their necks bulging in folds of

pink flesh over their high collars, their tunics so tight that they are constantly threatening to burst at the seams.

Until quite recently the few convicts who succeeded in escaping from the French penal settlements on the eastern side of the Maroni River found in Dutch Guiana an asylum if not a welcome, for it was felt that their punishments had made up for their crimes. But so many of these fugitives repaid the hospitality of the Dutch with atrocious crimes that sentiment has changed, and they are now arrested and returned to Cayenne. While I was in Paramaribo an escaped *déporté* murdered an inoffensive Chinese shopkeeper for his meager savings and, in a final burst of ferocity, horribly mutilated his victim.

Notwithstanding its almost obtrusive cleanliness, Paramaribo is not a particularly healthful town. The coolie laborers suffer from a variety of tropical diseases, including leprosy, though a hospital has recently been completed where the victims of this dread malady can be segregated and receive modern treatment. Malaria is prevalent because, owing to lack of funds, no attempt has been made to exterminate the mosquitoes which breed in the surrounding marshes, and few of the houses are screened. No one who values his health retires for the night until he has made certain that no *Anopheles* mosquitoes are lurking within the bed-netting.

In Guiana, as in the East Indies, the Dutch residents are enormous eaters, most of them having what amounts to six meals a day. Upon awakening—and one wakes early in the tropics—a servant appears with the equivalent of the Indian *chota hazri*: a cup containing a few spoonfuls of syrupy, sickeningly sweet coffee extract, a

pitcher of hot milk, and some sweet biscuit. Breakfast, served about eleven, consists of fruit—papayas, mangoes, melon, pineapple, or bananas—with more coffee and a thick slab of rich fruit cake. The principal meal of the day, served at one, usually consists of a single dish, known as *rijstafel*—literally, “rice table.” But what a dish! The foundation is an enormous bowl of rice, into which are stirred shredded chicken, chicken livers, chopped meats, shrimp, crab, various kinds of fish, vegetables and nuts, numerous highly spiced preserves and condiments, and anything else that happens to be at hand. Over this is poured a thick curry sauce, and the whole is washed down with three or four bottles of cold beer. This produces a state of lethargy which makes a two-hour siesta necessary. The siesta is hardly over before tea is announced—usually more coffee, accompanied by a great variety of rich pastries. Supper is at seven, and before turning in there is a final snack of cold meats, pickled fish, black bread, cheese, and beer.

In the British colonies even heavy drinkers usually wait until “the sun is over the yardarm,” but the Hollanders in Guiana, as in the East Indies, usually start in immediately after rising with a few slugs of “square-face” gin. This, they will assure you, keeps malaria away and is good for the digestion. During the heat of the day they consume enormous quantities of the local beer—and very good beer it is—and with sunset turn their attention to swizzles, slings, and punches made from gin or native rum. Yet, so far as I could judge, the Dutch appeared to be fully as healthy and energetic as their more abstemious



British neighbors—though the only thing in the Guianas that is really energetic is the vegetation.

Your colonial Dutchman is, as a rule, a regular church-goer and a devout Protestant. On Sunday morning, as soon as the church-bells begin to ring, the streets of Paramaribo are filled with the pious on their way to worship, prayer-books and hymnals under their arms. Despite the sweltering heat they are dressed exactly as though they were in The Hague or Amsterdam, the men looking like undertakers in their old-fashioned frock coats, high starched collars and stovepipe hats; the women in beaded bonnets and full-skirted gowns of stiff black silk or bombazine. As I was emerging from the hotel on Easter morning the pastor of the Lutheran church, high-hatted and frock-coated, a handkerchief tucked in his collar to prevent it from wilting, whirled by on a tandem bicycle with his wife in her Sunday best pedaling vigorously behind.

Paramaribo is a fragment of Dutch civilization set down on the fringe of savagery, for the cultivated lands form only a narrow strip along the coast and the bush comes down almost to the back doors of the town. A few miles beyond the city limits the roads run out and the trails begin, the principal highway of the colony being only twenty miles long. Dutch Guiana has but a single railway, 107 miles in length, running from Paramaribo to the goldfields at Dam. Normally there is one train a week in each direction, but when I was there, owing to lack of business, only one train a month was being run, and this had to make frequent stops in order that the crew might chop away the tropic vegetation,

which, when left unchecked for a few days, covers the rails with a dense tangle of creepers and vines. Throughout the greater part of the colony, however, the only means of travel is by the rivers, of which there are five large ones, connected by canals and cross-channels, that penetrate far into the hinterland. Yet river travel is anything but satisfactory, for frequent portages are made necessary by falls and rapids and during the dry season some of the streams are unnavigable even for canoes.

Like the adjacent French and British colonies, Dutch Guiana is enormously rich in timberlands, though, presumably from lack of capital, little attempt has been made to utilize them. The forests contain millions of feet of mahogany and satinwood, used for fine cabinet-work and veneering. The highly colored woods, greenheart, brownheart, and purpleheart, are employed in marquetry, particularly the inlaying of billiard tables. From the curiously mottled snakewood are made canes. From rosewood, so named because when cut it exudes a roselike fragrance, is extracted an oil which is used as the base of certain perfumes. Bully-trees are bled for balata, a gum largely used in the manufacture of belting. But the most interesting trees and plants are the non-commercial ones. Immortelles and flamboyants set the forests aflame. The waxy white blossoms of the frangipani fill the air with their heavy, sensuous fragrance. The *faya lobbie* bears dense clusters of vermillion, pink, or apricot blossoms the size of peonies. Clinging lasciviously to the trunks of the great trees or swinging from their branches are innumerable varieties of orchids, passionately colored, grotesque and obscene in form.

The interior of the colony is alive with game. Leopards are killed in large numbers for their spotted hides, which appear later on the backs of fashionable women. Jaguars are a pest, for they come down to the estates along the coast to prey on cattle. In appearance and ferocity the tiger-cat is a miniature edition of the Indian tiger. In addition to these there are numerous animals peculiar to South America: the tapir, which resembles something between a baby elephant and an overgrown pig; the long-snouted, bushy-tailed ant-eater, whose diet is confined to insects, preferably ants; the sloth, which, unlike other arboreal animals, does not walk upon the branches of trees but clings beneath them, so that when in motion it is always upside down; the armadillo, which can defy even the jaguar's teeth and claws by rolling itself into an armored ball. There are several varieties of deer, and, of course, monkeys, monkeys, monkeys.

Guiana is no place for one afraid of snakes, for its jungles are alive with reptiles: huge boa constrictors, sometimes thirty feet long, which can crush an ox in their coils as though it were made of cardboard; the equally large and formidable pythons, which swim in the rivers; labarris, rattlers, and, deadliest of all, bush-masters and fers-de-lance, both of which, unlike almost all other snakes, will attack without warning and without being disturbed.

Guiana is an ornithologist's paradise. Flocks of macaws and parrots flit from tree to tree in feathered rainbows. The great maroudi, or wild turkey, stalks warily through the undergrowth. Occasionally one glimpses the curious and beautiful bell-bird, whose note vibrates

through the jungle like a silver gong. Hanging from its forehead, like a red Phrygian bonnet, is a fleshy caruncle, which elongates as much as five inches when the bird sings.

The coastal lagoons and canals are filled with sea-cows and alligators, though the great cayman, sometimes twenty feet in length, is found only in the interior. Incidentally, all forms of reptiles—alligators, snakes, lizards—are becoming greatly depleted in the Guianas, and, indeed, throughout the tropics, because of the profitable market for their skins, which are in great demand by the manufacturers of luggage and women's footwear.

Though alligators and sharks make it dangerous to bathe in unprotected waters, the most dreaded inhabitant of Guiana's rivers is a little fish, seldom more than twelve inches long, called the piraya. They swim in schools and will attack any living thing which enters the water, be it animal or man. The great East Indian buffalo, which delights in wallowing in pools and streams, frequently falls a victim to these ferocious little fish, which bring the animal down by severing with their razorlike teeth its leg muscles and sinews and then attack it in such numbers that soon nothing remains but the skeleton. Though the largest of the French penal stations is on the Maroni, which forms the boundary between French and Dutch Guiana, the authorities make little attempt to patrol the stream, for the majority of convicts who have tried to escape to Dutch territory by swimming have been devoured by piraya.

The inhabitants of the interior are about equally divided between Carib Indians and Djukas, or "bush Ne-

groes," sometimes called Marrons. The Carib aborigines, originally warlike and ferocious cannibals and still none too trustworthy, are one of the few peoples in the world which practice the *couvade*—that is, putting the father to bed when a child is born.

The Djukas are descended from the blacks who before the abolition of slavery escaped to the jungle, where they have remained, leading an existence not greatly different from that of their West African brethren, speaking their own language, practicing their own religion, making their own laws and following their own strange customs. Though a fighting race and unfriendly to white men, they seldom molest them. But the European who goes into the interior has to take his chances with both the Djukas and the Indians, for the government, realizing the impossibility of exercising authority in the high bush, wisely leaves them alone.

The Djukas are short, squat, and powerfully built, their arms and shoulders magnificently developed by paddling, but, as they never walk if it can be avoided, they are underdeveloped from the waist down. Their weapons are bows and poisoned arrows, spears and machetes, though a few of them possess "six-feet-of-gaspipes" trade guns. They live in thatched huts, similar to those of Central Africa, though the grilled doors are often elaborately carved, with no furniture to speak of save rude beds and stools, for no Djuka may sit on the ground.

Far in the interior is their sacred and forbidden city, Dahomey, which has never been entered by any white man. Their religion is apparently akin to the serpent-

worship of the Haitians, for the examples of woodcarving which I bought from them, and the other pieces presented to me by a friend, all bear the snake design. The few Europeans who have come into contact with the Djukas, including the American vice-consul in Paramaribo, Mr. Lawton, relate extraordinary tales of the feats performed by the witch-doctors and medicine men. It is said that they walk barefooted on live coals, hold red-hot irons on their tongues, pierce their flesh with skewers without drawing blood, and make snakes of clay which they turn into living serpents by means of incantation. Though I have not seen these things I do not disbelieve them. To assert that a thing is impossible merely because you have not seen it is proof of a narrow mind.

The governor of Dutch Guiana, Dr. Rutgers, was formerly Minister of Agriculture in Java, and is of the same family, I believe, as the Colonel Henry Rutgers who founded the American college which bears his name. Cultured, courteous, and hospitable, like nearly all of the officials I have encountered in the Dutch colonies, he acknowledged my formal call by inviting me to Government House on Easter Sunday for luncheon. The table, laden with magnificent old Dutch silver bearing the arms of the Netherlands, was set in an out-of-doors dining-room. That is to say, it had no walls, the roof was thatched with palm-fronds, and the floor was covered with fine white sand. As it was a semi-formal affair, the governor and the other officials were in uniform, the collars and cuffs of their white linen coats heavily incrusting with gold embroidery. The servants, of whom there must have been a dozen, wore white tail-

coats with double rows of silver buttons, canary-colored vests, black satin knee-breeches and slippers with silver buckles. It was an interesting example of how punctiliously European colonial officials, even in the remotest posts, observe the formalities of the homeland. "They change their skies above them, but not their hearts who roam."

From my conversation with the governor I gathered that the backward state of Dutch Guiana is due to lack of capital, without which it is impossible to develop the rich timberlands and gold mines of the interior, to expand the zone of cultivation along the coast, or to improve the means of communication. The collapse of the sugar and coffee markets had been a staggering blow, and the production of cacao had been greatly decreased owing to a disease known as "witch's broom." The chief interest of the home government is in the extremely prosperous Dutch East Indies, and, as a consequence, this obscure and struggling possession in South America, despite its potential wealth in mineral and vegetable products, has been neglected and forgotten.

One might suppose that Dutch Guiana would be the last place on earth to be affected by communism. But the secret agents of Komintern's Latin-American bureau overlook no chances of stirring up dissension and sedition. Only a few days before my arrival in Paramaribo the Reds had staged a demonstration which had a sanguinary ending. Because of the economic effects of the depression there had been increasing unrest among the native population, and one morning several hundred

Negroes, Javanese, and British East Indians, inflamed by the harangues of communist emissaries, assembled before the government buildings. The attitude of the mob quickly became so menacing that the governor telephoned to the commandant of the garrison for military protection, and a few minutes later a force of Dutch infantry arrived on the scene. The commanding officer called upon the communists to disperse, and, upon their refusal to do so, the drums rolled their warning and the order to fire was given. When the smoke of the volley cleared away the mob was in flight, leaving behind two dead and some twoscore wounded men. Investigations made by the police disclosed that the affair had been instigated by emissaries sent from Moscow.

In connection with this episode Mr. Lawton told me an amusing story. It seemed that an American cameraman, making a series of "travel shorts," was in Paramaribo at the time. He was breakfasting in the Palace Hotel, which overlooks Government Square, when the Reds began assembling. Shouldering his camera, he hastened out, set it up in front of the government buildings, and began cranking. He obtained a remarkable picture of the affair: the threatening advance of the mob, the shower of stones, the arrival of the soldiery at the double, the blast of rifle-fire, the wounded dragging themselves away or tossing in agony on the ground, the two corpses stretched starkly in the sun. But it was not the sort of film which the Dutch authorities wished to have shown on motion-picture screens. It would not have been a desirable form of publicity for the colony.



Half an hour after the cameraman's return to the hotel he received a call from Mr. Lawton, who was accompanied by two Dutch officers.

"These gentlemen inform me that you took a motion-picture of the riot," began the consul.

"I sure did," was the answer. "And it ought to be a humdinger."

"They also inform me," continued Lawton, "that you will not be permitted to take the film out of the colony. It must be turned over to them."

The cameraman realized that nothing was to be gained by arguing.

"Very well," he agreed. "What they say goes, I reckon. But the film is still in the magazine. It will be ruined unless I take it out in a dark-room."

To this the officers, who knew nothing of modern motion-picture cameras, agreed. The cameraman shortly emerged from an extemporized dark-room and reluctantly handed over the tin box containing the reel.

When they had departed he turned to Lawton.

"When does the next plane leave this dump?" he demanded. "How soon can I get out of here?"

"There's a plane for Georgetown at noon," the consul told him.

"Good!" said the cameraman. "I'm going to be aboard it."

Lawton accompanied his compatriot to the airport. The cameraman was fidgety and nervous, continually glancing over his shoulder. At length the plane was ready to start.

"I suppose you think it's kinda queer my clearing out

in such a hurry, Mr. Consul," the American remarked as he was going aboard.

"You do seem rather anxious to shake the sand of Paramaribo from your feet," the consul admitted.

"I want to get this reel back to the States," the other whispered. "It's sure going to make a sensation at home."

"But you turned the film over to those Dutch officers," Lawton reminded him.

"Do I look as dumb as all that?" demanded the cameraman. "I switched the reels when I was in the dark-room. I've got the one with the picture of the riot right here in my case. The reel I gave those squareheads was an unused one."

## XI

### BOLÍVAR'S HOME TOWN

It was not easy to resist the temptation to keep on to Brazil, which is just around the corner from Dutch Guiana. But I reminded myself that I had set out to see the Caribbean countries, so, curbing my inclination to continue southward from Paramaribo, I doubled back to Port of Spain, which is a junction-point for the air lines to Venezuela, Colombia, and the Isthmus. Here I changed to a smaller and less luxurious type of plane, a Sikorsky amphibian, which, being fitted with retractable landing gear as well as pontoons, could settle with equal ease on land or water.

Though I carried credentials from the Venezuelan Ministry of Foreign Affairs and from the Venezuelan minister in Washington, the Venezuelan consul-general at Port of Spain was neither courteous nor accommodating. From him travelers bound for Venezuela must obtain a visa, without which they are not permitted to land, and in order to increase the revenue from this source he had evolved an ingenious expedient. The consular regulations, it seemed, authorized him to charge four times the regular fee for visas given out of office hours, as a union workman gets double pay for overtime. So, when cruise boats whose itineraries included

calls at Venezuelan ports arrived at Port of Spain, the consul-general declared a holiday. The consulate being thus officially closed, passengers wishing to go ashore in Venezuela had to pay twenty dollars for a visa. Though this scheme was doubtless profitable to the consul-general and his government, it brought about a considerable reduction in tourist traffic, for many travelers, including a distinguished American general, refused to be thus held up. During my stay in Caracas I ventured to call the matter to the attention of President Gómez. Within twenty-four hours orders were issued that the practice must cease.

From Port of Spain to Caripito, which is the first Venezuelan port of call, is a hop of only an hour and a quarter. As a gateway to the oldest of the South American republics Caripito is disappointing, for it is no more than a collection of miserable thatched huts and a few adobe shacks roofed with corrugated iron. At the airport, a sandy, sun-scorched clearing chopped from the bush, passports and luggage are examined.

At the next stop, Maturín, I was greeted by the governor of the province, a hard-boiled politico in breeches, boots, and sombrero, the largest pattern of revolver used by any civilized people in the holster at his hip, a raw-hide riding-whip tucked under his arm. He told me that he had received telegraphic instructions from the Foreign Office in Caracas to welcome me to Venezuela. Such gestures, which I found to be characteristic of the Latin-American governments, do more to give the visitor a favorable initial impression of a country than any amount of paid advertising, for they flatter his vanity by making

him feel that he is regarded as a person of some consequence and that his favorable opinion is worth having. Doesn't it raise your self-esteem to have a hotel room-clerk greet you by name?

Our course had taken us inland, above the tawny hills and gray-brown mesquite wastes of the Paria Peninsula, but at Barcelona, capital of the state of Anzoátegui, we came down to the sea again. To the northward, a few miles off the coast, could be discerned the outline of Margarita Island, famous since the days of the conquistadors for its pearl-fisheries. The island has lost its aura of romance, however, for nowadays its principal product is salted fish.

Beyond Barcelona the plane follows the line of the coast, from which the mountains rise so precipitously that it was comforting to remember that the Sikorsky was an amphibian, for the rugged nature of the terrain would have offered serious difficulties to a forced landing. The endless line of lofty forest-covered peaks suggested a row of Spanish dancers seated on the strand, their billowing green skirts bordered with the silver brocade of the beaches, ruffles of foamy lace swirling from beneath the hems.

La Guaira, the vestibule to the Venezuelan capital, is a noisy, ill-paved, squalid seaport town. Squeezed between the mountains and the sea, it is as hot as the inside of an oven save when the trade-winds are blowing. As in many Spanish-American cities, the shops and offices open on vaulted arcades, in whose shade a considerable proportion of the town's twelve thousand inhabitants spend their time in drinking, gossiping, and loafing. Dur-

ing the heat of the day the streets are almost empty. In the hot lands only dogs and foreigners walk in the sun.

Though reputable visitors are welcome in Venezuela, its elaborate system of passports and visas enables the authorities to keep tab on all who enter the republic, whether by boat or by plane. The names and descriptions of travelers are telegraphed to the capital by the consuls and immigration inspectors, so that upon arrival at La Guaira revolutionists, communists, criminals, and other undesirables find the secret police waiting to welcome them. The efficiency of this control system was illustrated in my own case, for I was met at the La Guaira airport by an attaché of the Foreign Office, which had been notified of my departure from Trinidad by the consul-general at Port of Spain.

The youthful diplomat who met me proudly announced that the sixteen-cylinder car in which he had come down from Caracas was the fastest in the republic, and the chauffeur proceeded to make good the claim. Though Caracas is only eight miles from La Guaira in an air line, it is four times that distance by the road, which has to surmount the mile-high summit of the coastal range before dropping down into the enchanting valley, itself three thousand feet above the level of the sea, on whose floor and slopes sprawls the Venezuelan capital.

Up the steep and winding highway, in places a mere shelf blasted from the rock, across trestles spanning dizzy gorges, along the edges of precipices where a plunge into eternity would be the penalty for a skid or a blowout, we fled like a frightened cat on the top of a backyard fence. A dangerous road despite its skilful engineer-

ing, as attested by the frequent signs admonishing motorists to drive cautiously and sound their horns. At one particularly perilous point a high cement pedestal had been built beside the road. Atop it was a wrecked automobile—a sermon none the less eloquent because it was wordless.

In general the vegetation of the breeze-swept uplands is limited to cactus and stunted pines. All about is a confusion of mountains, bare and brown. The flat-roofed adobe houses with their dusty dooryards reminded me of the Holy Land. So did the white-clad peasants, the donkeys laden with farm produce, the droves of evil-smelling goats, the black rocks and the occasional dejected-looking palms. But from time to time an interior valley, choked with tropical vegetation, ablaze with immortelle trees, broke the monotony of the scene. Behind us, with the singular effect produced by altitude, the cobalt Caribbean crept higher and higher toward the heavens, until it was hard to tell where the sea ended and the sky began.

Pausing at a *posta de la inspección*, where a sentry scrutinized my papers and took the number of the car, we raced into the suburbs of Caracas. Few cities in the world have finer situations. It is set in the center of a great green bowl, its buildings almost hidden by tropical vegetation. The surrounding slopes are dotted with the villas and gardens of the rich, and the great peaks of the Andes rise like sentinels all around.

Caracas is a city of many-colored two-story houses with grilled windows below and balconies above, with pottery roofs the shade of faded rose-petals and tiled

patios filled with flowers and birds; of old Spanish churches and public buildings of creamy limestone; frequent plazas with pompous statues of cock-hatted soldiers or frock-coated statesmen; gaudy posters advertising pelota matches or *corridos* or race-meets; dapper army officers in tight-waisted uniforms of bilious brownish green who swagger and twirl their moustaches and slash at imaginary enemies with their riding-whips; slender, dark-eyed señoritas with powdered faces and pomegranate lips, dressed in the height of the Paris fashion; bronzed Andinos astride of wiry ponies; little policemen in blue helmets like those of London bobbies and terracotta colored uniforms; high-powered motor cars, high-wheeled carts drawn by white, betasseled oxen—in short, a most pictorial city, almost as colorful as it is depicted on the covers of the circulars issued by the tourist agencies.

The only really first-class hotel, the Majestic, was built by a syndicate headed by President Gómez and is said to be a replica of the Hotel Colón in Barcelona—the Barcelona in Spain, I mean. It has all the appurtenances of Latin-American “high life”: a sidewalk bar where society drops in at noon and again at dusk for cocktails, a swimming-pool which is likewise frequented by the élite, a dance-floor with colored lights which can be dimmed until the patrons are dancing in near-darkness, the noisiest jazz orchestra south of Harlem, a gum-chewing telephone-girl who is a platinum blonde, a doorman who looks like a Russian grand duke and is uniformed like a British field marshal. In this establishment an American could hardly help feeling at home.



The rooms are furnished in *el estilo moderno*. The frenetic patterns of the wall-papers and carpets suggest that their designers were suffering from St. Vitus' dance or delirium tremens. For the convenience of those guests who do not speak Spanish each room is provided with a row of push-buttons bearing amusing little pictures of waiters, chambermaids, and valets de chambre. And, a rare thing in Latin America, the faucets and toilets in the bathrooms actually work.

Elsewhere I have intimated that San Juan is the world's noisiest city, but after my first night in Caracas I decided that I had done the Porto Rican capital an injustice. Perhaps the total volume of noise is not quite so great in Caracas, but the Venezuelan city has several sleep-wrecking devices which San Juan seems to have overlooked. For its size Caracas has an enormous number of churches, and every church apparently has a full carillon of bells, some sonorous and pleasing but most of them harsh and grating. These start ringing at the very crack of dawn and keep up their infernal racket—*bing-bang-cling-clang-ding-dong*—until the faithful are at Mass and others are on the verge of madness. No sooner do the church-bells leave off than the day-long fanfaronade of motor horns begins, for in Caracas all motor vehicles are equipped with peculiarly raucous and piercing hooters and sirens. These add to the general hubbub and excitement and scare the wits out of the slow-witted, slow-moving peons.

Because, no doubt, of its profusion of trees and shrubbery, parks and promenades, statues and fountains, Caracas is reminiscent of certain European cities—Nice, say,

or Carlsbad or Baden-Baden—without actually resembling them. Its atmosphere of leisure and gaiety is accentuated by the numbers of well-dressed men and women who seem to have no occupation. These saunter about aimlessly, examining the *articles de luxe* displayed in the shop windows, sipping coffee or cognac at small tables in front of the cafés, or lounging in rented chairs in the plaza listening to the excellent military band.

On the beautification of Caracas the Venezuelan government has spent large sums, on the whole very intelligently. Certain of the *avenidas* are as fine as any thoroughfares in the world, and everywhere are plazas, parks, and public gardens. Instead of yielding to the temptation to erect new, ornate, and expensive public buildings, the government has had the great good sense to content itself with the fine old Spanish ones, thus preserving an atmosphere of mellowed dignity which is restful and pleasing. Millions of bolivars have been expended in the acquisition of works of art, many of dubious merit but some really fine. Miraflores Palace, the official residence of the Venezuelan presidents, is filled to overflowing with paintings and statuary, and so is the Municipal Palace, the domed ceiling of its magnificent elliptical hall being decorated with a superbly executed mural which is in effect a panorama of the war of independence. In the same room, in a richly carved frame, is displayed one of the nation's greatest treasures, the standard of Pizarro, the colors of the silk almost as brilliant as when, four hundred years ago, the great conqueror unfurled it on the soil of Peru.

Few cities in the world have such beautiful suburbs as

Caracas. The most fashionable residential quarter, where the legations are situated, is fittingly called El Paraíso, its slopes dotted with luxurious villas, white, pink, occasionally pale yellow or cerulean, set in gorgeous tropical gardens. Though Caracas is only about ten degrees from the Equator it is never too cool for comfort and rarely too warm, this happy medium being due to its altitude of three thousand feet and to the encircling mountains. As a consequence its gardens are filled with flowers of both the temperate and torrid zones. I have never seen orchids growing wild in its streets, as the advertisements of tourist agencies claim, but in its gardens they are almost as common as pansies are at home: giant mauve cattleyas, twice the size of those grown in American hothouses, cypripediums, epidendrums, odontoglossums, some of them as beautiful in color as they are repulsive in form. The grand prize at the Tropical Garden Club flower show held a year or so ago in Miami was won by a collection of Venezuelan orchids sent from Caracas by airplane.

Disabuse your mind of the idea that Latin Americans are an indolent folk and do not care for sports. The crowds which attend the football and baseball games, the boxing, tennis, and pelota matches, and the horse races prove the contrary. Golf has little appeal to the Latin temperament, being played only by the wealthier classes and the foreign residents, but the course at the Caracas Country Club compares favorably with the finest in the United States. The club itself, with its luxurious furnishings, its spacious swimming pool, beautiful lawns

and gardens, and its broad terraces commanding entrancing views of the Andes, is one of the most attractive I have ever seen.

The bullfighting season begins about Christmas and lasts until mid-spring, but, as the use of horses is prohibited, the Venezuelan *corridas* are not the gory and cruel spectacles which they are in Spain and Mexico. Though the native bulls are not as savage as the Andalusian, neither are they exhausted by attacks on the picadors, and, consequently, face the matador on more nearly equal terms.

The people of Caracas turn out in great numbers for the race-meets, which are held at the Hippodrome. The satin-coated thoroughbreds prancing on the bright green turf, the vivid silks of the jockeys, the uniforms of the officers, the smartly dressed men and women form an ensemble as brilliant, if on a smaller scale, as can be seen at Longchamps or Auteuil. Overlooking the Hippodrome is the Pavilion, a copy of the Moorish palace at the Colonial Exposition in Paris, its dazzlingly white walls relieved by bands of colored tiles. Owned by the government, it is to Caracas what the Casino in Central Park is to New York—a fashionable and expensive rendezvous for luncheon, tea, dinner, and dancing.

Downtown, opposite the Hotel Majestic, is the colonnaded Teatro Nacional, where during the season, thanks to generous subsidies from the government, operas and dramas are produced by first-class companies direct from Europe. Some of the cinema houses are as up to date as any in the United States. Most of the films are American-

made, with Spanish titles, and, as they are brought down by plane, they are shown on the screens of Caracas almost as soon as on Broadway.

In no other Latin-American country are the citizens of *América del Norte* so well liked and so cordially welcomed as in Venezuela. Indications of that country's friendliness for the "Colossus of the North" are provided by the statues of George Washington and Henry Clay which occupy conspicuous sites in Caracas. The Venezuelans rank Washington immediately after their own national hero, Bolívar; they cherish the memory of the great Kentucky statesman because of his championship of the South American peoples when they were struggling for independence.

Venezuela is, indeed, the only Latin-American country where we are not only liked but trusted, for the Venezuelans have not forgotten that on two occasions the United States was ready to take up arms in order to save their country from European aggression. In 1895 President Cleveland, in his memorable message to Lord Salisbury, bluntly threatened Queen Victoria's government with war if it persisted in its aggressive policy toward Venezuela. A decade later, with equal bluntness, Theodore Roosevelt ordered the Kaiser to withdraw his warships from Venezuelan waters, backing up his ultimatum with a display of sea-power which effectually dispelled the German dream of obtaining a foothold in this hemisphere.

In downtown Caracas is an old house of the Spanish period, one story high, with no grounds or garden, its iron-barred windows opening directly on the street.

Though unimposing, of no architectural distinction, it is the most venerated shrine in South America, for it was the home of the Liberator, Simon Bolívar. From the Isthmus to the Horn the name of Bolívar is a household word; it has been given to countless streets and plazas, to numerous cities, to several states and to one republic; in every capital you will find a statue of him astride his prancing war-horse, for to the brilliant young Venezuelan soldier six South American countries owe their independence. Yet for some *Americanos del Norte* the name of the great patriot is of no significance.

"Just who was this Bolívar?" I heard an American woman, obviously a tourist, ask her husband as they stood before the equestrian statue of the Liberator in the principal plaza of Caracas. She pronounced his name as though it were spelled "Bollyvar."

"He was just another revolutionist, I guess," was the reply. "All I know about him is that there's a damn good cigar named after him."

Simon Bolívar was born in Caracas, a son of the old Spanish aristocracy. His father being a man of wealth, the lad was sent to Europe to be educated. He was in Paris during the closing phases of the French Revolution, which made a deep impression on him; he studied law in Madrid; visited the United States while Thomas Jefferson was president; and returned to his own country determined to devote his life to freeing it from the Spanish yoke. In 1811, upon the outbreak of the war for independence, young Bolívar offered his services to General Miranda, who had learned the soldier's trade with the French in the American Revolution and later in the Low

Countries, and under that brilliant leader served with great distinction.

When, upon the collapse of the republic which he had established in Colombia, Miranda was compelled to surrender to the Spanish, Bolívar, though not yet out of his twenties, became the leader of the struggle for independence. It took him thirteen years of almost continuous fighting to break the power of Spain in South America, but he eventually made himself master of all that portion of the continent composed of the present republics of Venezuela, Colombia, Panama, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia—a region three-quarters the size of the United States. He died when only forty-seven at Santa Marta. Though the difficulties of the war of liberation had compelled him to assume the powers of a dictator, there is no shadow of proof that he was ever insincere in his devotion to liberty; and in its cause he freely spent the large fortune he had inherited.

Bolívar is buried in the Pantheon, a one-time convent-church in the outskirts of Caracas which has been turned into a sort of Westminster Abbey. The Liberator sleeps in a massive bronze sarcophagus in a chapel whose walls bear tablets expressing the gratitude and homage of the other countries which he freed. Close by is another sarcophagus, carved from white marble, which bears the name "Francisco Antonio Gabriel Miranda" and has a half-open lid. Empty, it awaits the ashes of the other great hero of Venezuelan independence, who died in a Cadiz prison and is buried in Spanish soil.

Tremendously impressive in its simple dignity is this

Venezuelan Valhalla. We in the United States, for all our hero-worship, have nothing like it.

"Is there no admission fee?" I asked the Foreign Office official who took me to the Pantheon.

"Certainly not," he replied with a touch of asperity. "We do not commercialize our national heroes." And added:

"But I remember that when I visited the United States and made a little pilgrimage to Mount Vernon I had to pay a fee—half a dollar, I think—to see the tomb of Washington."



## XII

### EL BENEMERITO

AT ELEVEN minutes past noon there was a sudden commotion without El Pabellón, whose tiled domes and snowy minarets rise above the Caracas race course like a palace of the Arabian Nights; the hoarse honking of motor horns; brisk orders; the clink of spurs and sabers; a ripple of *vivas*.

The orchestra broke off abruptly in the middle of a tango. The beautiful young girls with gardenia skins and geranium lips and the sleek young men with patent leather hair and coats that were too tight at the waist stopped dancing and withdrew from the bright tile floor. The throng of fashionably dressed folk who had been sipping *apéritifs* at the little gilt tables rose and peered expectantly toward the door.

A compact group of men appeared at the entrance to the ornate *sala de baile*. Most of them wore the thin garments of the tropics; two or three were in khaki service uniforms with gold aiguillettes festooned over their right shoulders. A pace or so in advance of the group an old man walked slowly. He was so thin that his tunic of greenish gabardine, devoid of decoration save for the gold shoulder-straps of a general, seemed several sizes too large for him; his badly cut breeches were tucked

into the tops of yellow riding boots. Through horn-rimmed spectacles a pair of singularly alert and penetrating eyes peered from beneath the visor of a high-crowned kepi. His naturally dark skin had been tanned by sun and wind to the color of a much-used saddle. A grizzled cavalry moustache failed to camouflage the grimness of his mouth and jaw. As he crossed the threshold of the ballroom the orchestra leader brought down his up-raised baton. Reeds, strings, and brasses crashed into the stirring strains of the Venezuelan national anthem, "*Gloria al Bravo Pueblo*."

Advancing slowly across the bright red dance-floor, the old man ascended a low dais at the far end of the room. Awaiting him was a chair so massive and ornately carved as to suggest a throne. I had heard of that chair. Plates of bullet-proof steel were said to be concealed beneath the upholstery of its high back and arms. Directly behind it, in a gilt frame, hung a life-size photograph of its occupant. On either side of the great chair, seats for the members of the entourage were ranged in a semi-circle, minstrel-fashion.

Now the orchestra struck up a waltz. Immediately the floor was crowded with whirling couples—dark-haired, provocative-eyed girls in Paris frocks, lithe youths dressed in the height of fashion. The old general settled back in his chair, clasped his gray-gloved hands on the hilt of his sword and regarded the dancers benevolently while I regarded him.

He is worth regarding, is General Juan Vicente Gómez,\* President of Venezuela, for he is the most re-

\* General Gómez died December 18, 1935.

markable figure between the Rio Grande and Cape Horn. He is the last of the great Latin-American dictators. For more than a quarter of a century he has ruled Venezuela, a country larger than France and Germany combined, with a velvet-gloved hand of iron. Only rarely has he found it necessary to remove the glove. That his dictatorship has been a benevolent and, on the whole, a popular one is suggested by the title, "*El Benemérito*"—"The Meritorious"—which his people have bestowed upon him.

He admits to being in the late seventies, but those who should know assert that he will never see eighty again. In any event, he is still going strong. Though he has never married, he is credited with having had upwards of fourscore children, of whom he recently legitimized thirteen.

General Gómez is an "Andino," a native of the High Andes. And therein lies one of the secrets of his power, for his fellow mountaineers, a rugged, fighting stock, have always been intensely loyal to him. He sees to it that the bulk of the army is composed of Andinos, or, at least, that the principal cities are garrisoned by Andino regiments, for he knows that he can depend on them. The devotion of these wild hillmen is that of Highland clansmen for their chieftains.

He is reputed to be the richest man in Latin America, and this is probably no exaggeration. In fact, he probably does not himself know the amount of his immense fortune. His land holdings run into millions of acres. He numbers his cattle by tens of thousands. His wealth in forests and oil fields and gold mines and asphalt deposits

and sugar, cacao, and coffee plantations is beyond computation. Indeed, there is scarcely a money-making enterprise in the country that he hasn't a finger in.

Unlike the Mexican dictator, Porfirio Diaz, who told me that he learned the shoemaker's trade at an early age so that his brothers and sisters might not go barefoot, Gómez was not born in poverty. His father was a prosperous landowner, and young Gómez's early life was devoted to agricultural pursuits. And at heart he is still a farmer. He did not enter politics until he was nearly forty. Elected vice-president, he was left in charge of the government in 1908 by Cipriano Castro when that ruffianly ruler suddenly betook himself to Europe for his own and his country's good. Apprised of a plot for his assassination, Gómez sprang a *coup d'état*, had himself elected president, and seized the whip and reins. He has never relinquished them. For, though he has twice retired from the presidency, his successors were puppets of his own selection and he pulled the strings. Having retained the post of Commander-in-Chief, he had the army behind him. No matter who has occupied the Palace of Miraflores, Juan Vicente Gómez has remained for close on three decades undisputed master of Venezuela.

General Gómez rises at daybreak, breakfasts at seven, spends the morning consulting with his ministers and attending to the business of state. When in Caracas he leaves the palace at the stroke of noon for the Pavilion. There he remains for an hour and a half, receiving foreign diplomats and visitors, chatting with his friends and watching the dancing. He returns at six for another hour of recreation. For safety's sake he uses on these oc-

casions five large gray touring-cars, identical in make, model, and color. Until the moment of departure no one knows whether he will ride in the first car, the second, the third, the fourth, or the fifth. This is very disconcerting for would-be assassins.

After a late dinner with a few close cronies the President spends an hour or so viewing motion-pictures, having had an up-to-date sound equipment installed in the palace. The latest feature, educational, and news pictures are sent to him from the United States by plane, and special films are frequently presented to him by foreign governments. He has never set foot outside his own country, remarking that at his time of life there is no necessity of subjecting himself to the discomforts of foreign travel when he can sit in an armchair at home and have the world brought to him on the screen.

He is fond of gaiety and likes to have young people about him. When at Maracay, the fortified camp beyond the mountains which is his favorite residence, he gives frequent parties, at which he occasionally dances with his seventy-year-old sister, who keeps house for him. The mother of his last batch of children, a woman of good though not aristocratic family, lives in quiet dignity in Caracas, respected by every one.

The President leads a life which combines the easy-going, lavish hospitality of a rich *hacendado* with the formality and pomp of a European sovereign. Wherever he goes he is accompanied by a huge entourage: ministers, aides, secretaries, servants, sentries, secret service men, and politicians. When he moves from Caracas to Maracay, or to his seaside place near La Guaira, the

political and social worlds of Venezuela move with him. Though no ruler in the world is more closely guarded, the poorest peon can obtain an audience for the asking.

A story told me by a foreign diplomat illustrates the essential fairness of the man. Some years ago his favorite son seduced a girl of humble family in Maracay. The girl's father asked for an audience with the President.

"Well," demanded *El Benemérito* when he had heard the man's story, "what do you wish me to do about it?"

"I want your son severely punished, *Señor Presidente*."

"Yes. That goes without saying. But what else can I do to make amends? Do you want the boy to marry your daughter?"

"No. That would not be fitting."

"Do you want money?"

"No, *Señor Presidente*. All I ask is that your son be suitably punished for the shame he has brought to my daughter."

"He will be punished," the President said grimly. "Rest assured of that, *mi amigo*."

The youth was brought to trial and sentenced to two years' penal servitude—a stiff sentence under the circumstances. And it was no gilded captivity either. The Dictator's favorite son spent those two years in chains in La Rotunda, the great circular prison in Caracas. When it came to the ears of the father that the governor of the prison was secretly mitigating the harshness of the sentence by taking off the lad's chains at night and supplying him with cigarettes and other luxuries, the governor was summoned to the palace.

"You will treat my son no differently from any other

prisoner," *El Benemérito* said sternly. "You will find yourself in chains if I hear of any further favoritism being shown him."

But, when the young man had served his sentence, his father presented him with a house near his own mansion in Maracay, a large hacienda, and an imported racing car. Today father and son are the best of friends.

For one who has had some eighty children born out of wedlock, President Gómez is somewhat inconsistent in his attitude toward the morals of others. Not long ago he appointed a certain well known politician to the collectorship of one of Venezuela's seaports. Shortly thereafter the President was informed by the secret police that the appointee had taken a lady friend with him to his new post. Gómez ordered the pair brought back to Caracas.

"I will not tolerate immorality among my officials," he told the terrified politico. "You may have your choice between going to prison and marrying this lady immediately."

"Certainly I will marry her, *Señor Presidente*," the official assured him.

"But I haven't the slightest intention of marrying *him*," declared the lady. "I like him for a lover, but I won't have him for a husband."

Eventually she changed her mind. It is not wise to disobey the orders of *El Benemérito*.

Until quite recently the university students of Caracas, because of their communist tendencies, were a source of trouble and anxiety to the government. Things came to a head when Red emissaries fomented a student uprising.

It was suppressed promptly and without bloodshed, however, by the arrest of the ringleaders. Thereupon all the other students assembled before the palace and demanded that they be arrested also. The President took them at their word, and they were given six months' hard labor on the roads. Then he returned them to their families, each with a brief note. "I am sending you back your boy," it ran. "He has learned how to work, without which nothing of permanent value can be accomplished. Henceforward you will find him a more dutiful son and a better citizen."

At about the same time the president of another Latin-American republic, El Salvador, was suppressing a communist rising in his country by slaughtering ten thousand of its citizens.

An old *insurrecto*, after years of exile, recently succeeded in evading the secret police and slipping into Venezuela for the purpose of starting a revolution. He was apprehended and brought before Gómez.

"You and I are getting to be old men, my friend," said the President. "It is time for us to give thought to the hereafter. Let's have no more killings. We don't want a lot of dead boys on our consciences when we go to meet our Maker."

That revolutionist is now living peacefully on an hacienda presented to him by the Dictator.

On occasion, however, General Gómez dispenses with the velvet glove, revealing a hand of iron. But he does not send his enemies to the scaffold, or before the rifles of a firing-party. He prefers quieter methods. Those who thwart him suddenly disappear and are seldom



heard of again. They are buried alive in the dark, dank underground dungeons of La Rotunda or spend the rest of their days in the terrible island-prison of El Castillo, off Puerto Cabello. *El Benemérito* is not always as benevolent as he appears.

These stories of the President were told me in guarded tones by the government official who had taken me to the Pavilion. As we were talking a bearded, pleasant-faced man who had arrived with the President descended from the dais and approached our table.

"Here comes the Secretary-General, Dr. Requeña," whispered my companion. "He's Gómez's right-hand man and the head of the presidential household."

"How do you do, Colonel Powell?" he said cordially, in perfect English, shaking hands. "The President desires me to say that he would like the pleasure of meeting you. Follow me, if you please."

"I suppose you think it queer that the President should receive visitors here instead of at the palace," the Secretary-General added. "But General Gómez likes young people, and he enjoys the music and the dancing. And don't be surprised if he says only a few words to you—this is merely an introduction. You will be invited to the palace or to Maracay later on."

We skirted the floor of polished tiles, where dancing was in full swing, and a moment later I found myself bowing before the emaciated figure in the great chair and shaking the limp, gray-gloved hand that was extended to me.

Though the eyes which the President bent upon me were stern and piercing, they were not devoid of friend-

liness and good humor. About this patriarchal ruler, indeed, there was something very likable and winning. There was little to suggest the ruthless dictator; he seemed, rather, a kind old gentleman who would get along famously with children.

The audience, as Dr. Requeña had predicted, was of brief duration.

"I am leaving for my country place at Maracay in the morning," said the President after a few formal questions. "I hope to see you there. I should like to show you my farm and to have an opportunity for a longer conversation."

I thanked him, bowed, and withdrew. *El Benemérito* rose, and in an instant every one in the great room was standing. The red-coated orchestra again struck up the national anthem. Moving slowly across the floor, responding to salutations by raising his gray-gloved hand to the visor of his kepi, he and his staff passed out into the blinding sunshine. From the window I noted that he entered the last of the five gray cars which were awaiting him.

One hundred and ten kilometers south of Caracas, between the coastal range of the Andes and the northern edge of the Llanos, or Great Plains, is Maracay, the garden city and fortified camp in one which is the country seat of the President and the headquarters of the Venezuelan army. It is connected with the capital by a narrow-gauge railway, used mainly for freight, and by one of the finest scenic highways in the world, a broad ribbon of cement which crosses the mountains by a five-thou-

sand-foot pass in a bewildering series of figure-eight and hairpin turns.

President Gómez believes in opening up his country by roads instead of railways, and an extensive highway system is now in course of construction. In fact, it is already possible to motor as far south as the Orinoco, and this road will eventually be extended to the borders of Brazil. Another road, rapidly approaching completion, strikes southwestward from Caracas to the Colombian frontier, where it will connect with the road which the Colombian government is building to Bogotá. In crossing the Colombian Andes this road will attain a height of nearly fifteen thousand feet, which will make it, if I am not mistaken, the loftiest through highway in the world. The distance by road between Caracas and Bogotá is about a thousand miles, and it will be possible to make the trip quite comfortably in three days, thus effecting an enormous saving in time over the present route via Barranquilla and the Magdalena River.

One passes in effect from the temperate to the torrid zone in motoring from Caracas to Maracay. Startling in its abruptness is the change in vegetation as you plunge down from the barren, wind-swept heights to the plains. Bordering the road are the haciendas of the great land-owners, with their vast sugar, coffee, and cacao plantations. In the spring the last are covered with a canopy of vermillion blossoms, immortelles being used as "mammies" to protect the tender cacao trees from the sun. The fiery flowers of the flamboyant set the countryside aflame. Hidden behind hedges of hibiscus or crotons are old Spanish ranch houses smothered in pink, red, or crim-

son bougainvillea, the stems sometimes as large as a man. In the river valleys flocks of flamingos form splashes of coral-pink against the lush green grass. In places the road leads through the tropical forest. Birds of brilliant plumage flash from tree to tree; orchids gleam amid the foliage like the colored lights on Christmas trees; from the boughs hang lianas which resemble giant pythons.

The approaches to Maracay, the most important military post in the republic, are guarded like those of a fortress. Barring the road is an iron gate, from which barbed-wire entanglements run off into the forest on either hand. We halted in obedience to a sentry's brusque challenge. An officer appeared from the guardhouse beside the road and examined our papers. "*Adelante!*" he said crisply. The gate swung open and we entered a great, heavily wooded park, a sort of tropical Bois de Boulogne, which forms a semicircle of verdure around the northern side of the town.

I find myself at a loss when it comes to describing Maracay, for it is by way of being unique. If you can picture in your mind's eye a combination of Versailles, Aix-les-Bains, and Agua Caliente, set down in the center of a dead-flat, emerald-green plain encircled by magnificent tropical forests, which in turn are hemmed in by tremendous pink-and-purple mountains, you will have as good an idea as I can give you of this extraordinary place.

Maracay was created by President Gómez, partly for personal, partly for political reasons. He likes the mildness of the climate, which most Andinos find too warm, and in the immediate vicinity he owns upward of a mil-

lion acres of forest, grazing lands, and plantations. But Maracay's real *raison d'être* is a military one. Instead of scattering his forces about the country in small garrisons, which could be wiped out by sudden local risings, General Gómez has wisely concentrated the bulk of his army at Maracay, which is an ideal base from a strategic point of view, for excellent roads radiate from it in all directions, it is within striking distance of Caracas and the principal coast towns, it commands both the mountain passes and the approaches to the Great Plains.

Dominating everything else in the town are the enormous *cuartels*, whose bastions and crenelated walls of yellowish stone are reminiscent of the barracks at Potsdam. In these are quartered the troops of the garrison, consisting of three brigades of infantry and one of cavalry, together with certain special service units, all kept at war strength. The Maracay garrison, which comprises the élite of the Venezuelan army, is in reality a potential expeditionary force, so completely motorized as to be extremely mobile and ready to take the field at an hour's notice. Unless this well drilled and well equipped force could be defeated, the chances for a successful revolution would be very slim.

The President ensures the loyalty of the army by seeing to it that the troops are well paid, well fed, well clothed and well treated. Moreover, those of them who so desire may supplement their army pay by working on the vast estates which General Gómez owns in the vicinity of Maracay. Reville is at five A.M., and the men drill until seven-thirty, when they are transported in motor trucks to the presidential haciendas, where they

work until mid-afternoon, when they are returned to barracks. For this the President pays them four bolivars (about eighty cents) a day, the same wage-scale received by civilian laborers. Though this agricultural work is not compulsory, most of the soldiers eagerly avail themselves of the opportunity to add to their incomes. As a result of this arrangement the Venezuelan army is, in effect, a sort of Civilian Conservation Corps, but, instead of being employed on public projects, the soldiers are employed by the President, who pays them from his own pocket. This may strike Americans as a curious and unethical system, but, as General Gómez pointed out to me, there is this to be said for it: by the time a soldier has completed his term of enlistment he has generally accumulated a modest nest-egg; he has had practical training in some form of agriculture—horse or cattle breeding, dairying, grain-growing, the cultivation of coffee, cacao, or tobacco; and he is fitted to work the farm which the government will give him, tax-free, for the asking.

In the center of Maracay, whose streets are regularly laid out, exceptionally wide and shaded by fine trees, is a vast plaza, filled with tropical trees and flowers, from which rises an equestrian statute of General Bolívar. Overlooking the plaza is the Hotel Jardín, said to cover a greater area than any other hotel in the world. This may be, and probably is, an exaggeration, but it does cover as much ground space, I estimated, as the Waldorf-Astoria in New York. The lower floor is a maze of tile-paved corridors, courtyards, terraces and arched loggias, marble fountains, pools and colonnades,

gardens riotous with flowers, beautifully decorated ball-rooms, lounges, restaurants and bars, all designed so as to capture every vagrant breeze, for Maracay is uncomfortably close to the Equator.

The luxury of the hotel is always a matter of astonishment to foreign visitors, who wonder how so small a place can support such an establishment; but that is because they do not understand how things are done in Venezuela. Like the Majestic in Caracas and the Miramar at Macuto, near La Guaira, the Jardín was built by a syndicate in which President Gómez was reported to hold a controlling interest. When it was found that they did not pay all three were sold to the government at a handsome profit.

The "season" at Maracay is not dependent upon the time of year but upon the whim of the President. When he is in residence it is almost impossible to find a place to sleep, for the town is crowded with government officials, politicians, office-seekers, concession-hunters, and others who hope to gain his favor. When he departs for Caracas or Macuto all these go with him, leaving Maracay deserted save for the small permanent population and the garrison.

Because Maracay is his favorite place of residence (for its climate agrees with him), President Gómez has left nothing undone to enhance the town's attractions. There is a fine club, a hippodrome with flat and steeplechase courses, a theater for the presentation of dramas and light operas and another for motion pictures, an aviation field, a casino, a large and beautiful swimming pool, a modernly equipped therapeutic establishment, a botanical

garden, a zoölogical park containing a complete collection of South American animals, birds, and reptiles, and the most powerful radio station on the continent. If you are of an ethnological or archaeological turn of mind you will find much to interest you at Lake Tacarigua, half an hour by car from Maracay. The lake, frequented by enormous numbers of wild fowl, is twenty-two miles in circumference, contains twenty-two islands and is the source of twenty-two rivers. Here extensive excavations have been made by scientists under the direction of the Secretary-General, Dr. Requeña, who claims that the vast numbers of human skeletons, shards, and implements which have been uncovered prove his contention that this region once formed a part of the "lost continent" of Atlantis.

When the President is at Maracay he drives out every morning to the casino at Las Delicias, an idyllic spot in the edge of the forest. Here he likes to sit with a group of cronies, watching the dancing, listening to the music of an excellent military band, strolling through the botanical gardens or inspecting his model dairy farm. The walls of the casino, inside and out, are adorned with aphorisms and sentiments, some of the latter smacking of political propaganda. One of them reads: "Nothing worth having is gained without work." Another: "When El Benemérito became president there were neither motor cars nor motor roads in Venezuela. Behold the country now!"

Even those to whom dictators are anathema are compelled to admit that the methods employed by President Gómez in governing Venezuela, however arbitrary and



extra-constitutional, have brought peace and prosperity to a country which, less than three decades ago, was a synonym for misgovernment and political anarchy.

When Gómez succeeded President Castro in 1908, Venezuela was one of the worst governed countries in the world. The administration was rotten with corruption. Revolution followed revolution. Executions and assassinations were of almost daily occurrence. No one's life or property was safe. Castro's henchmen obtained estates which they coveted by confiscation and not infrequently took the young daughters of the owners as well. Because of its refusal to pay its debts the government was at loggerheads with the Great Powers, which would have occupied the Venezuelan ports had it not been for the intervention of the United States.

Today, though it has not escaped the depression, Venezuela is perhaps the most prosperous country in Latin America. There is little unemployment. Taxes are low, generally speaking, and agricultural properties are entirely free from taxation. The internal debt is less than five million dollars, a comparatively paltry sum, and I was told that there was enough gold in the vaults of the Treasury to pay it off twice over. And the republic is unique among the nations of the world in that it has no foreign debt, for on June 30, 1930, the hundredth anniversary of the death of Bolívar, its external obligations were completely paid off in gold by order of President Gómez as a gesture of homage to the Liberator. This happy condition is largely due, of course, to Venezuela's enormous wealth in oil, for it is the world's second larg-

est petroleum producing country, but a very large measure of credit must be given to President Gómez.

Having known nearly all the dictators of my time—Díaz, Barrios, Venizelos, Kemal, Pilsudski, Horthy, Mussolini, Calles, Carmona, Hitler—and having had opportunities to judge their methods, failures, and achievements, it strikes me that Venezuela has been singularly fortunate in Juan Vicente Gómez. If those who have sought to overthrow him have conveniently disappeared, it should be remembered that Venezuela has had no revolution for nearly thirty years, which can be said of no other Latin-American country. If he has enriched himself at his country's expense he has at the same time given it an extraordinary degree of prosperity and has enabled it to pay off its foreign debt. If the roads which his government has built have enormously enhanced the value of his own properties, they have also opened up vast areas to colonization and improvement. If he demands a rake-off from every profitable project, Venezuelan and foreign business men alike know that he will keep his word and that they can develop their enterprises without fear of being double-crossed. If he ignores the Constitution, the Congress, and the courts, he has nevertheless established law and order and made Venezuela as safe as any country in the world. If he is ruthless toward those who seek to thwart him, the poorest peon knows that by going to the President he can get a fair hearing and a square deal.

Opposed as I am to government by dictatorship, I nevertheless feel that Juan Vicente Gómez is deserving of the title which his people have bestowed upon him.

## XIII

### “FROM A PEAK IN DARIEN”

IT USED to be said that if you were going to India you needed only one letter of introduction, because the person to whom it was addressed would pass you on to his friends, and they to their friends, *ad infinitum*.

The same holds true in Latin America, where both native and foreign residents show to visitors a hospitality which at times is almost embarrassing. Again and again I found awaiting me at the airports persons who to me were utter strangers. Their greetings were much the same:

“My name is Smith [or Brown or Jones]. So-and-so at Caracas [or Paramaribo or Panama or Port of Spain] wired me that you were coming on this plane. Glad to meet you! Where’s your luggage? Here’s my car. Hop in. We’ve just time for a nip at the club before dinner. Of course we’re going to put you up. No use arguing. My wife would never forgive me if I didn’t bring you back with me. We don’t have many visitors down here, you see, and it’s a treat to talk with some one from God’s country.”

Thus I was greeted by the manager of one of the big oil companies in Maracaibo. He said that a mutual friend in Caracas had radioed him to look after me. For

this I was grateful, for the Maracaibo hotels do not enjoy a high reputation.

Like all the great oil companies operating in Venezuela his concern maintained a sort of club for the benefit of its resident officials. It was a comfortable and comparatively cool place, with big armchairs and lots of newspapers and magazines and a bar and billiard tables and tennis courts and a guest house whose bedroom doors opened directly on a large swimming pool, so that one could have a swim the first thing in the morning and the last thing before turning in. The oil companies leave nothing undone to make their resident officials comfortable and contented, for even under the most favorable conditions life in the hot lands is trying for foreigners, whose mental and physical efficiency rapidly deteriorate if nostalgia sets in.

Maracaibo bakes in the sun on the low-lying west bank of the strait which connects Lake Maracaibo, one hundred and thirty miles long, with the Gulf of Venezuela. Gulf and lake were discovered in 1499 by Alonso de Ojeda. The explorer must have been a man with an active imagination, for the miserable Indian villages, their palm-thatched huts set on piles above the water, the winding channels, the dugout canoes, caused him to name the region Venezuela—“Little Venice.”

Ojeda christened a single country, but he was accompanied by an Italian friend, Amerigo Vespucci, whose name, by a fortuitous circumstance, was given to two continents. Vespucci was not a geographer, as is generally supposed, but a Florentine merchant with a flair for travel and literature. On his return to Europe in 1501 he

wrote a detailed account of his voyage, which was published by Martin Waldseemüller as an appendix to his *Cosmographia*. Up to that time the only map of the New World was the one which had been drawn by Columbus' first mate on an oxhide. But on this crude chart, now in the museum in Madrid, the lands which the great navigator had discovered were unlabeled. And they remained unlabeled until 1507—fifteen years after Columbus' first voyage—when the German cartographer brought out his famous atlas. "But now the parts have been more extensively explored and another fourth part has been discovered by Americus Vespucius," Waldseemüller wrote in his introduction, "I do not see what is rightly to hinder us from calling it Amerige or America, after its discoverer Americus." The real Discoverer had then been dead barely a year. His ghost must have smiled cynically upon reading that introduction.

Until the discovery of oil, Maracaibo was a squalid, sleepy provincial town, the capital of the state of Zulia. But when great geysers of "liquid gold" began spurting from holes drilled along the edges of the lake by foreign prospectors, the population and prosperity of Maracaibo began to increase by leaps and bounds, and today it is the largest city in South America north of the Amazon.

Whatever this region may have been like in Ojeda's time, today it is not even remotely reminiscent of Venice. It has a hot and very humid climate, its mosquitoes are a pest and a peril to health, the shores of the lake are fringed with forests of oil-derricks, its water coated with greasy scum. But it is the treasure-house of Venezuela,

the royalties paid by the oil companies constituting the major part of the national income.

At Maracaibo I discovered that I had left in Caracas a silk dressing gown which I valued. I mentioned the loss to the local manager of Pan-American Airways, remarking that it would probably be some time before I could afford as good a one. Three days later, in Panama, a messenger brought me a parcel containing the missing garment. The manager at Maracaibo had radioed to the manager at Caracas and the latter, retrieving the gown from the room in which I had left it, had forwarded it to the Isthmus by the next plane.

After Maracaibo the next stop is Barranquilla, which is the junction for the Pan-American line to Jamaica and the Scadta Airways to the interior of Colombia. Here again I was tempted to stop over, for, though I had no desire to revisit Jamaica, I was eager to see the Colombian capital, Bogotá, five hundred and fifty miles inland, which can be reached in four and a half hours by plane. I reluctantly abandoned the idea, however, for the planes used along the north coast have limited passenger accommodation and all seats are usually booked weeks in advance, so that there might have been no room for me when I was ready to go on again. Every long journey I have taken has been punctuated with regrets for places I did not have time to see. But perhaps it is as well to leave places unseen, curiosities ungratified, for then you will have at the back of your mind the hope that you will some day return.

Though Barranquilla, which has a population of 100,000, is only seven miles from the mouth of the Magda-

lena, a bar of shifting sands makes it inaccessible to ocean-going vessels, which discharge and take on their cargoes at Puerto Colombia, fourteen miles away. But the Magdalena, more than a thousand miles long, is navigated for more than half that distance by stern-wheel river boats. It is a slow trip up the river to Bogotá, but that is the way to go if you wish to see something of the interior and can spare the time.

From Barranquilla the Panama-bound planes soar straight across the Gulf of Darien, and do not sight land again until the islands of the Mulatas Archipelago, green peppermint drops on a bright blue cloth, rise to view. These islands fringe the San Blas coast, a wild and almost unknown region of swamps and jungle, reeking with miasma, infested with poisonous snakes, peopled by savages armed with blowguns and poisoned arrows. The San Blas Indians, a primitive, unfriendly folk, live in huts perched on stilts above the water's edge and are so suspicious of strangers that they will not permit them to remain in their villages overnight. In the distance, a sinister purple cone against an ashes-of-roses sky, rose that "peak in Darien" from which Balboa looked down upon the Pacific.

Most people think of the Isthmus of Panama as running north and south and of the Canal as running east and west. Instead, it is the other way round, roughly speaking. In fact, the Caribbean entrance to the Canal is some miles farther west than the Pacific entrance. At the proper season of the year it is possible to see the sun rise from the Pacific and set in the Caribbean, which is the direct opposite of what we learned in school. Indeed, I

know of no place where even one with a knowledge of geography and a well developed “bump of locality” is so bemuddled and turned around as on the Isthmus.

Equally puzzling is the Canal Zone’s relation to the Republic of Panama, for there is nothing to indicate where the one ends and the other begins. Nevertheless there is an appreciable distinction. If you see a Y.M.C.A. you will know that you are in the Zone; if you see a saloon you are in Panama.

The Zone consists of a strip of land, ten miles wide and fifty long, stretching from ocean to ocean, through the center of which runs the Canal. This narrow strip, leased in perpetuity to the United States, bisects the Republic of Panama. The only other instance of the territory of one country thus intersecting that of another is the Polish Corridor, which separates East Prussia from the rest of the German Reich.

At the Caribbean entrance to the Canal two cities, Cristobal and Colón, sit side by side. Between them there is no visible sign of demarcation, no barrier, no sentries, no frontier posts, yet they represent different civilizations, for Cristobal is in the Zone and under American jurisdiction, Colón in the republic. Panama City, the capital of the republic, and Ancon, the seat of the American administration, are similarly juxtaposed on the Pacific side.

Everything in the Canal Zone, including its two hotels, the Washington at Cristobal and the Tivoli at Ancon, is run by the United States Government. The former is a luxurious and fairly expensive establishment; the latter, a frame structure built in the early days, though



perhaps not quite so comfortable, is comfortable enough. Both are admirably run, and the rates at each are about the same as at similar hostelries in the States.

The Canal Zone being a military reservation, the sale of liquor is prohibited. This entails no hardships for the thirsty, however, for both the Washington and the Tivoli are within a few yards of the boundary of the republic, which is one of the wettest places on earth. If you prefer you can buy the stuff in bottles and drink it in your room, but if you are staying at the Tivoli in Ancon you will find it much more amusing to step across the line to the Century Club, only a stone's throw away, on whose pleasant terrace you will find assembled at mid-day and again toward dusk most of your fellow guests. Much more fashionable and luxurious, however, is the Union Club, which is a favorite rendezvous of Panamanians and foreigners alike. It is built on the edge of the sea, with a terrace overlooking the Gulf of Panama, and if you expect to spend some time on the Isthmus you had better ask a friend for a guest-card.

Nowhere in the world is there such a startling contrast in municipal methods and morals as that which you find in stepping from American Cristobal to Panamanian Colón, which adjoin each other. Cristobal is as sedate and respectable as any New England community; Colón is a stinking sink of iniquity. I have known some pretty tough towns in my time, including Port Said when it enjoyed the reputation of being the wickedest city east or west of Suez. But even in their wildest days none of them ever had anything on Colón, where every form of vice exists, flourishes, and flaunts itself.

I am no prude, Heaven knows, but I don't care to have prostitutes of every color under the sun and of pretty much every nationality dart from curtained doorways, seize me by the arm and attempt to drag me into their bordellos. I resent the lecherous, furtive-eyed specimens of humanity who whiningly importune one to buy pornographic photographs or postcards. I feel like manhandling the pimp who tries to lure me with promises of unspeakable obscenities. It doesn't amuse me to lose my money in gambling joints which are notoriously crooked, particularly when I know that a stranger stands a chance of being knocked on the head and "rolled" for his watch and pocketbook. A pipe and a pallet in an opium den hold no attraction for me. And I don't like to see young men wearing the American uniform, or youths just off the cruise boats, lurching along the streets in the company of painted courtesans or being dragged out of saloons and bawdy-houses, fighting-drunk or dead-drunk, by the M.P.'s, the Shore Patrol, or the spiggoty police. Yet you can see all these in the course of a half-hour stroll through the principal streets of Colón, within three minutes' walk of the Washington Hotel. Indeed, you can't escape them. Mind you, I don't expect our soldiers and sailors to be mollycoddled, treated as namby-pambies, but I do resent the fact that they are exposed to such intolerable conditions and that nothing is done about it.

"But what *can* we do about it?" a Zone official demanded. "We can't step in and clean up Colón and Panama because both are in foreign territory. And if we were to declare those towns out of bounds it would raise

merry hell generally. We are constantly making complaints about conditions to the Panamanian authorities, and they are constantly assuring us that they will be corrected. Now and then some of the more notorious resorts are raided and closed, but they open up again within a few days. The truth is that some of the most influential political leaders in the republic are growing rich from these brothels and gambling joints. That's the answer."

Now, no one familiar with the conditions denies that the United States has it in its power to end these outrageous conditions. But, in order not to antagonize the other Latin-American nations, the government at Washington seeks to maintain the fiction that the Republic of Panama is a sovereign state and that we must not meddle in its internal affairs. The fact is, however, that in everything save name Panama is an American protectorate, just as Egypt is a British protectorate. This was proved not long ago when American troops were marched into the republic in order to put down a Communist demonstration. To this intervention the Panamanian government assented, of course, but you may be certain that the troops would have gone in even had its assent been withheld.

Generally speaking, I am opposed to a powerful government coercing a weak one, but under certain circumstances coercion is justified. In this case, however, I do not think that pressure would be necessary, for, judging from certain hints dropped by high Panamanian officials, a mutually profitable dicker could be made.

Ever since the Canal Zone was leased to the United

States the government of Panama has been seeking permission to build a highway across the Isthmus. Yet Washington has steadfastly opposed the perfectly reasonable desire of a foreign government to link its two most important cities, Panama and Colón, by road—even though the road should run through Panamanian territory. The ostensible reason for Washington's refusal is a strategic one, the military claiming that an ocean-to-ocean highway would facilitate invasion by a hostile power. The Panamanians and others will tell you that the real objection is that such a highway would put an end to the monopoly at present enjoyed by the Panama Railroad, which is owned by the United States Government.

There once was a road across the Isthmus. The Spaniards built it more than four hundred years ago, and over it was transported by mule for shipment to Spain the loot of Peru. At the Pacific end of that road, in 1519, Pedraria Dávila founded the original city of Panama, the first town established by Europeans on the American continent. It quickly became one of the richest cities in the New World, but its wealth led to its downfall. For in 1671 the English buccaneer, Sir Henry Morgan, having ravaged the rest of the Spanish Main, landed on the Isthmus, fought his way across to the Pacific side, captured and looted Panama, and then destroyed the city, leaving hardly a stone on a stone. The jungle did what little Morgan had left undone, and soon the golden city was but a memory. Eventually, however, a new city, the present Panama, was built about five miles west of the original site.

With the exception of the ancient cathedral and a few other buildings dating from Spanish times, Panama is a city of no architectural distinction. In the old quarter of the town the buildings are squeezed together like tenements; the streets are narrow, tortuous, and frequently end in cul-de-sacs. A number of modern buildings have been erected, but in most cases the effect is ruined by the dilapidated structures which rub shoulders with them. Save in the residential quarter there are few trees or gardens, and missing are the malecons, alamedas, paseos, and avenidas which lend such distinction to the capitals of most of the other Latin-American republics.

The charm of Panama is in its cosmopolitanism, for it is one of the world's great crossroads and through it pass in a steady stream travelers from the three Americas, from Europe and the Orient. Though it has only about seventy thousand permanent inhabitants it is fully as busy and appears to have quite as many cars as cities of the same size in the United States, and this despite the fact that there is only one motor road of any length—from Panama to David—in the republic. Which reminds me that in Panama one drives to the left instead of to the right. For this custom an amusing reason is advanced. It seems that in the old days, when the French were trying to dig the Canal and making a bad job of it, the cab-drivers, who kept to the right, in cracking their long-lashed whips frequently flicked the pedestrians on the right-hand sidewalks. In order to put an end to this annoyance the authorities reversed the rule-of-the-road.

Though Panama has several general emporiums, the bulk of the retail business is in the hands of small mer-

chants, most of them Orientals, whose gaudy merchandise appeals to the tourist trade. In this respect it resembles another city at the entrance to another canal—Port Said. Very tempting to untraveled visitors are the exotic goods displayed in the small shops: Japanese kimonos and silks, Syrian embroideries, Cantonese shawls, Philippine drawnwork, Benares brassware, Jaipur enamels, Indian carved ivory, Chinese porcelains, Mexican serapes, French perfumes, old Spanish jewelry and laces. The best of the Panama hats are made in Ecuador. For fifteen dollars you can buy a genuine Montecristo which would cost fifty dollars in New York. The proprietor of one hole-in-the-wall shop tried to sell me surreptitiously a human head. It had come from Ecuador, where the Indians of the interior decapitate their enemies and shrink the heads to the size of a small grapefruit, without distorting the features, by baking them in hot sand. I could have had this grisly trophy at a bargain, but, though I am a collector of curious things, I draw the line at human heads.

Speaking of bargains reminds me that when I first visited Panama, a good many years ago, workmen were engaged in removing the beautiful old Spanish tiles from the ancient cathedral and laying some kind of modern, unlovely roofing in their stead.

"If one had those tiles in the United States," I remarked to the secretary of the American Legation, "he could get almost any price he asked for them. There is a big demand for the genuinely old ones now that Spanish architecture has become the vogue."

Months later, at a club in Santa Barbara, California, I met the secretary again.

"Do you remember that when you were in Panama," he asked, "they were taking the tiles off the roof of the cathedral?"

"Yes."

"Well, after thinking over what you said, I bought them. I shipped them to the States and they are now in Los Angeles. But, what with the packing and the freight, they have cost me rather more than I had expected. Do you happen to know any one who might buy them?"

"Sitting over there," I said, "is Francis Underhill. He might be interested."

I introduced the diplomat to the famous sportsman and architect. In twenty minutes they had made a deal which gave the diplomat a handsome profit. Underhill used the tiles on the roof of the mansion which he was building for C. K. G. Billings in Montecito.

In spite of breezes from two oceans the Isthmus is hot. I forget the average daily temperature, but it is somewhere between eighty and ninety. The real wear and tear of life on the Isthmus is not due to the degree of heat, however, for the mercury never climbs as high as it does in summer in parts of the United States, but to its persistency, for it is no cooler in January than in July. Unlike the Philippines and India, it has no hill-stations where foreigners can find temporary relief, so that even on the most rugged constitutions this steady heat, week in and week out, has its effect.

In their tropical possessions the British and the French invariably protect themselves against the sun with hel-

mets. With them it is a shibboleth. Yet a topee is rarely seen on the Isthmus, although it is in the same latitude as the Malay States, India, the Red Sea, and the Gold Coast. Civilians generally wear Panamas, the troops wear felt campaign hats (the most unmilitary and slovenly headgear used by any civilized army), and the sailors stick to their little, narrow-brimmed canvas caps—yet one never hears of a case of sunstroke. Perhaps the actinic rays of the sun are not so deadly on the Isthmus—or perhaps Americans are harder-headed.

No American can view the Canal without feeling a new and justifiable pride in his country. It not only represents the achievement of the biggest engineering project in the history of the world, and the most costly—though the exponents of the New Deal would not consider the expenditure of 375 million dollars as anything out of the ordinary—but its construction was characterized from beginning to end by the very highest efficiency. For the American Government, and particularly Theodore Roosevelt, had the great good sense to ban politics and to give to one man, Major-General George Washington Goethals, undivided and unquestioned authority.

That policy has wisely been continued to this day. The high commissioner of the Philippines, the governors of Alaska, Hawaii, Porto Rico, and the Virgin Islands are all political appointees and are subject to political pressure from Washington. But the governor of the Canal Zone has always been an army officer and the undisputed boss of the show.

I doubt if any other governmental organization in the



world is as free from politics and is as efficiently run as the administration of the Canal Zone. Nothing counts save ability. In the Zone political pull does more harm than good. Pompous gentlemen with massive watch-chains festooned across their paunches do not drop in on the governor, as they do on governors at home, and blandly suggest that if So-and-so were appointed to such-and-such a position it would be for the good of the Party.

The government of the Zone is, of course, an autocracy. Too much is at stake for it to be anything else. Undesirable characters are not permitted to land. Trouble-makers are deported. Graft is nonexistent. Sanitary regulations are rigidly enforced, the authorities insist upon absolute cleanliness, and, as a consequence, disease has been banished.

In talking to the governor I commented on the entire absence of mosquitoes.

"Mosquitoes?" he snorted. "Haven't you noticed that there aren't even any flies?"

That these carriers of disease should have been completely eradicated throughout the length and breadth of a strip of swamps and jungle half a hundred miles long and eight degrees from the Equator constitutes an even more extraordinary achievement than the Canal itself.

I don't know whether the Zone is a popular station from the army point of view, but it ought to be, for in no tropical country are troops better cared for. In catering to their well-being and contentment nothing has been left undone. The barracks are situated and constructed with a view to ensuring the greatest possible:

degree of coolness; every form of recreation—clubs, libraries, cinemas, swimming pools, athletic fields, tennis courts—has been provided for the men; the food served in the messes is good enough for any one. Incidentally, I was impressed by the extraordinary high average of intelligence among the enlisted men. This, I gathered, was largely due to the depression, which brought into the ranks men who in better times would never dream of joining the army. The commanding officer of an engineer regiment told me that 80 per cent of his enlisted personnel had college educations.

The powers-that-be live at Balboa Heights, which is a suburb of Ancon. It is a pleasant spot. Its miles of winding drives give its inhabitants ample room, its trim houses are surrounded by beautifully kept lawns, and, being set high above the Pacific, it enjoys a breeze whenever there is one. A golf course has been laid out on the glacis of the obsolete fortifications; many of the houses have swimming pools; tennis courts bake in the sun. As at all army posts the social life is a monotonous one. You meet the same people at dinner, sit at identical tables on identical chairs—though the furniture provided by the Government nowadays is a vast improvement on the old, god-awful Clydesdale pattern—and listen to the same conversation. “I hear that Major Smith has been transferred to the Presidio.” “These wretched native servants can’t be trusted with anything—they are much better in the Islands.” “I’d never go home on one of those awful transports if I could afford to travel by one of the regular steamship lines.” “Is it true that Mrs. Hilary was at one of those awful dance places in Panama last

night with Captain Jones?" But despite their petty jealousies and love of gossip I like Army people; they are friendly and hospitable and light-hearted and always ready to make the best of things.

For those connected with the Canal administration, or in either of "the services," life in the Zone is pleasant and fairly inexpensive. The quarters are modern and comfortable, servants are cheap, and every one on duty in the Zone is entitled to make purchases at the army commissaries, the largest of which is in Ancon. It is really a big department store, and at it may be bought meats, groceries, clothing, furniture, cigars and cigarettes, garden implements, sporting goods, in fact pretty much everything under the sun, and in most cases much more cheaply than at home.

One hot Sunday afternoon a friend in the legation took me to a prize-fight. It was held in Panamanian territory, in the disused bull-ring. One of the principals was a freckled, sandy-haired young sailor who was the then middleweight champion of the United States Navy; the other was a tall, pantherlike Negro known as "the Pride of Panama." The American was the favorite, and there was a good deal of betting. I noticed that the American spectators, who were greatly outnumbered by the Panamanians, kept close together at one side of the ring. "If our boy knocks out the nigger there may be trouble," my companion explained. But there was no trouble, for the Negro k.o.'d the sailor in the third round. He sent him through the ropes and into the midst of the band, barely missing the bass-drum.

The American Minister asked me if I cared to meet

the president of the republic. I told him that I should, whereupon one of the secretaries rang up the palace and made an appointment for the following morning. Though a fine building and luxuriously furnished, the palace lacks impressiveness because it has no grounds or gardens. President Harmodio Arias is a slightly built man, affable, suave, and self-possessed. He reminded me of President Manuel Quezon of the Philippines without physically resembling him. Like most Panamanians of the upper class he was educated abroad, is widely traveled and speaks fluent English. Though on occasion he has been a thorn in the side of the Washington Government, he gave me the impression that he liked Americans.

The conversation turned to President Roosevelt's visit to the Isthmus, and that brought up the subject of deep-sea fishing. I remarked that fishing was my favorite pastime.

"Would you enjoy a fishing trip to the Pearl Islands?" asked the President.

"I know of few things I should enjoy more," I told him.

"Good! I shall ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs if he can arrange it for tomorrow. I only wish that I could spare the time to go along."

The Pearl Islands are in the Gulf of Panama, about forty miles off the coast. They are famous for their tarpon fishing. We embarked at dawn—the Minister of Foreign Affairs, half a dozen government officials, and myself—on the Panamanian navy, a one-time New York tugboat which is used as a revenue cutter and serves as

the presidential yacht on occasion. When I reached the wharf sailors were engaged in stowing away hamper after hamper of sandwiches, salads, and cold meats, case after case of beer, ice-filled buckets from which protruded the necks of champagne bottles. Rather elaborate preparations, it struck me, for a fishing expedition. But, as it turned out, I was the only one who did any fishing, for immediately after lunch my companions fell asleep and snored until evening. But they had a rest from the work of running the republic and I had a perfectly grand time.

A Panamanian friend whom I had known in the United States invited me to spend a week-end on his hacienda, a hundred and fifty miles up-country, on the way to David. I accepted gladly, for I wanted to see something more of the republic than Panama and Colón. The trip was disappointing, for the road, which follows the Pacific coast, was rough and dusty, and the scenery, though tropical of course, not particularly interesting.

But life on the hacienda was greatly to my liking. Latin-Americans are the most hospitable folk on earth, but, as there is no set program, their hospitality is not wearing. Everything was very informal and easy-going; I was made to feel as though I were at home. After a leisurely breakfast on the gallery before my room—in my opinion the American family breakfast is an abomination—horses were brought round and my host and I went for a ride over the plantation. Dinner was at one. Afterward the entire household adjourned to a sort of pavilion in the garden. It had no sides, so that the air could circulate freely; the floor was of hard-packed

earth, and the roof was thatched with palm-fronds. It looked like the crew's quarters on a warship, for it was filled with hammocks. They were made by the Indians from some sort of fiber, and there could have been no less than a dozen of them.

At home I never dream of sleeping in the daytime, and I have never adopted the custom when in the hot lands. But in Latin America the siesta is as much a part of the daily routine as afternoon tea is in England. After the siesta came a cold shower and cocktails. In the evening young people drove in from the neighboring haciendas and there was music and dancing. After the guests had departed and the family had retired I sat on the gallery in my pajamas, at my elbow a tall glass with ice tinkling in it, and looked out upon a countryside, bare and brown by day, which the moon had transformed into a silver fairyland. Night-birds called to each other with weird cries; in the black shadows cast by the trees I felt that things were lurking. In those latitudes the stars are as brilliant as city lights and seem much nearer than at home. I discovered a constellation which I told myself was the Southern Cross, though I knew that it was really nothing of the kind. The heavy scents of tropic flowers rose in waves of perfume from the garden. A faint land-breeze gently stirred the palm-fronds. It was very restful after all the weeks of flying and sight-seeing. I was sorry that I had to go on.

## XIV

### BANANA REPUBLICS AND COFFEE KINGDOMS

I HAVE always felt sorry for those afflicted with mental myopia, who lack the happy faculty of envisaging through the mind's eye things which they have not seen. For them geography—to me the most fascinating of subjects—is merely a series of colored maps sprinkled with strange names. What a pity that it cannot be taught in a plane instead of in a schoolroom!

For before the eyes of the air-traveler unfold the pages of an atlas with living maps and illustrations. He sees white cities with magic names gleaming in the sun, Indian villages perched on stilts above palm-fringed lagoons, hidden harbors in whose bright blue waters the anchors of the sea-rovers rumbled down, steaming jungles, crocodile-infested rivers, coffee and cacao and banana plantations, volcanoes wreathed in smoke and steam. And nowhere else is geography so simplified as in flying over Central America, where from a plane both oceans may frequently be seen at the same time and where countries follow one another in bewildering succession. For example, between dawn and early afternoon of a single day five republics—Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador—flit by beneath

the northbound air-liners which take off twice weekly from France Field in the Canal Zone.

The first stop is at David, two hundred miles west of Panama. A small agricultural town, the capital of the Chiriquí district, it offers the casual traveler nothing worth seeing. The next stop is at Santa Ana in Costa Rica. Break your journey there by all means, for it is the airport for the capital, San José, an hour's drive over an execrable road. While your passport is being stamped and your luggage examined take a look at the hedge bordering the driveway, for probably you will never see another like it. It is of orchids and, when I was there, was in full bloom. The airport manager, who between planes has time to figure out such things, estimated that at New York prices the blossoms were worth about ten thousand dollars.

Running the length of Costa Rica is the main cordillera of the American continent, with its characteristic parallel ranges and a lofty plateau between them. On this plateau, thirty miles from the Pacific and nearly four thousand feet above it, is San José. Over the city broods, purple and grim, the volcano of Irazú, which lifts its smoke-wreathed crater 11,200 feet into the blue. Though not extinct, it is somnolent and generally well behaved in spite of occasional ominous rumblings. It provides the Costa Rican capital with a noble background, and the natives regard it with pride and affection, but I shouldn't care to have a live volcano in my backyard.

In San José you won't need the tropical garments which you wore in Panama, for temperature is a mat-



ter of altitude rather than latitude and the city's lofty elevation gives it one of the most delightful all-the-year-round climates in the world, an eternal spring. During the dry season the blue-and-gold days are no warmer than those we have at home in early June; at night you will always need at least one blanket. The mean temperature on the plateau is 68, if that means anything to you, whereas on the coast, which is almost within sight, it is at least fifteen degrees higher.

San José is not an old city. It was founded in 1738 but remained an insignificant mountain village until Spanish rule came to an end in 1821, when the seat of government was transferred there from Cartago. It is the cleanest and most attractive of the Central American capitals. It has a modern and excellent hotel, the Gran, built by American fruit interests; shops stocked with imported goods, largely French and Spanish; the stereotyped plaza with the invariable bandstand and palms; a large cathedral with paintings so darkened by age and dirt that it is impossible to judge them; a club which would do credit to any city in the world; a great number of fine old homes, their galleries and gardens reminiscent of those in Charleston; miles of well paved, well shaded, and well lighted streets; and an abundant supply of pure water which you may drink with perfect safety.

There are few buildings over two stories high because of the frequency of temblors, which are so common that no one pays any attention to them. To a visitor, however, they are rather disconcerting. One evening while reading in my room I was suddenly hurled from the large armchair in which I was sitting, or, rather, the

chair was wrenched from under me as by a mighty mischievous hand. For a moment I assumed that the friend with whom I was staying had played a practical joke on me, for the pictures did not sway and there was no perceptible vibration. Only when I found that I was alone in the room did I realize that there had been an earthquake.

From San José's business district a fine boulevard, the Paseo Cristóbal Colón, leads to the Sabana, a grassy common, covering many acres, which was left to the municipality by a priest as a public playground and pasture. Here a group of enthusiastic golfers, mainly foreign diplomats, have laid out a nine-hole golf course; but, as the only hazards are the ditches which crisscross the Sabana and the cattle which graze upon it, the Ancient and Royal Game as played in the Costa Rican capital is really cow-pasture pool.

The presidential palace is a square, squat, mustard-colored building which looks more like a factory than the residence of the republic's chief executive. Close by, built in the Spanish style and encrusted with lustrous tiles, is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, given to Costa Rica by Andrew Carnegie. Though too small to be impressive, it is an architectural gem.

The palace overlooks a fine park shaded by venerable trees. In the center of the park is the National Monument—a heroic group in bronze of five irate, scantily clad young women pursuing a cringing fugitive who looks as though he had escaped from a chain-gang. The angry Amazons symbolize the five Central American republics, and the hunted man is supposed to represent

William Walker, the American adventurer and filibuster who conquered Nicaragua, defeated Costa Rica, invaded Honduras, and died before a Honduran firing-party after having been treacherously handed over to his enemies by a British naval commander.

President Oreamuno asked me, a little maliciously, what I thought of the group.

"Artistically it is a fine piece of work," I told him. "But historically—"

I hesitated because I did not wish to appear discourteous.

"Well?" he demanded.

"Historically, *Señor Presidente*, it is a libel on a very brave man. Whatever his faults, no one ever accused William Walker of cowardice."

The President evidently did not relish my answer, for he abruptly changed the subject.

I suppose this monument, like the one which the Italians erected on the battlefield of Adowa forty years after that great disaster, serves to assuage the galling memory of a defeat. But it does not alter history. Not all the statuary in the world can obscure the fact that the Costa Ricans were ingloriously routed by Walker. No American with red blood in his veins can read without a thrill of pride the story of the dapper little Tennessean, "the gray-eyed man of destiny," who, with a few score followers, called by one great military "the bravest of the brave," fighting always against overwhelming odds, made himself master of a great part of Middle America. Because he failed in the end we slightly refer to Walker as a filibuster, whereas we acclaim

Jackson and Houston and Frémont and Stockton and all the others who succeeded in expanding our national boundaries as patriots. The difference between filibuster and patriot, it would seem, is the difference between failure and success.\*

The American Legation in San José, a handsome villa which was formerly the residence of a wealthy Costa Rican, is owned by the United States, so that our ministers do not have to set about house-hunting immediately upon their arrival. Within a stone's throw of the legation is a huge yellow *cuartel*, whose loopholed bastions and crenelated walls give it a certain resemblance to a medieval stronghold. On the other side of the city, a mile or more away, is another barracks. During the revolution of February, 1932, one *cuartel* was held by government troops, the other by *insurrectos*. For some days the two waged an artillery and machine-gun duel regardless of the fact that the American Legation was directly in the line of fire. As a memento of that occasion its shell-scarred, pockmarked walls have been left untouched. Our minister, Mr. Eberhardt, showed me the nose of a shrapnel shell which had awakened him by falling on his bed.

This would suggest that political conditions are as unstable in Costa Rica as in other Latin-American countries, yet such is not the case. As a matter of fact, the republic has had only three revolutions in more than a hundred years, which is a record for Central America;

\* For a more extended account of Walker's exploits see Colonel Powell's *Gentlemen Rovers*.

and all, or nearly all, of its presidents have died peacefully in their beds.

"Costa Rica has six hundred soldiers and six thousand school teachers," President Oreamuno told me. "That shows how peaceful a country it is."

I had an opportunity to see the bulk of Costa Rica's little army, which is really a force of national police, on the Sunday I spent in San José, when a military Mass was celebrated in the cathedral. It was a very picturesque and colorful ceremony, for the entire garrison and the cadets of the military academy attended in full dress. Filling the body of the church were brilliantly uniformed officers with their wives and sweethearts; a military band was stationed before the altar, and the aisles were lined by troops with fixed bayonets. At the elevation of the host the bugles shrilled, the drums ruffled, the officers drew their swords and the troops presented arms, so that the interior of the edifice was filled with gleaming steel and martial music. Rather a singular fashion, it struck me, for a professedly peaceable people to show their devotion to the Prince of Peace.

Costa Rica was discovered and named by Columbus on his fifth and last voyage. Here, in the golden ornaments worn by the natives—ornaments which are still archaeological prizes and the subject of much controversy as to their origin—the Spaniards found the first traces of the gold they had so assiduously sought. Assuming that the precious metal abounded, Columbus called the region Costa Rica—"Rich Coast." Though the next half-century saw the conquest and pacification of the country, it did not prosper, for the quest for gold

was carried on relentlessly, to the neglect of everything else, and the Indians, enslaved and ill-treated, rapidly died off.

In Spanish times Costa Rica was a part of the *audiencia* and captaincy-general of Guatemala; but it joined Mexico when Middle America threw off the Spanish yoke. Though it broke away from Mexico two years later, when Iturbide attempted to form an empire comprising all of the newly liberated states, its status remained rather vague until 1848, when it formally proclaimed its independence.

Barring the struggle with William Walker, in which it was defeated, Costa Rica enjoyed uninterrupted political tranquillity until 1917, when Federico Tinoco overthrew President González by a coup d'état. But President Wilson refused to recognize the Tinoco government and on his insistence it was expressly stipulated in the Treaty of Versailles that Costa Rica should not be admitted to membership in the League of Nations as long as Tinoco remained president—an exhibition of petty spite which had a most unfortunate effect on our relations with the Central American states. But when Tinoco was ousted in 1919 by a counter-revolution this restriction was removed and Costa Rica was permitted to join the galaxy of nations at Geneva. In 1925, offended by criticisms for not having paid her dues, Costa Rica withdrew from the League in a huff, and, when that august body asked the little republic to reconsider, the latter replied by demanding a definition of the Monroe Doctrine. As the United States was not a member of the League this demand was ignored, but Costa Rica

eventually swallowed her pride and returned to Geneva. During the boom years which followed the Great War, Costa Rica wallowed in prosperity. But this economic honeymoon ended in 1932, when the collapse of the coffee market, followed by widespread unemployment, precipitated an outbreak of political turbulence which was suppressed with considerable bloodshed.

The principal product of Costa Rica is coffee. The Costa Ricans boast that their coffee is the finest in the world, but, as it is not to the American taste, most of it is marketed in England and Germany. Upon the size of the coffee crop and the price which it brings depends the prosperity of the country and, to a considerable extent, its political tranquillity. If there is a large crop and prices are high every one is happy; if the crop is small and the prices low then there will be unemployment, poverty, discontent, and, quite possibly, trouble. Though of recent years the country has had bumper crops, these have been more than offset by the acute depression in the coffee market, a condition which Brazil tried unsuccessfully to improve by dumping tens of thousands of sacks into the sea. Though the Costa Rican government has watched closely the attempts of the New Deal to boost the prices of cotton, wheat, and other staples by restricting production, it is not likely to follow such a policy in regard to coffee.

Though long famous for its bananas, for years an important and highly lucrative industry, Costa Rica has become in effect a one-crop country, for the production of bananas has steadily declined owing to plant disease, the abandonment of exhausted lands, and legisla-

tion restricting the operations of foreign growers. The last is a manifestation of ultranationalism, and to some extent of anti-Americanism, for many Costa Ricans resented the commercial exploitation of their country by foreigners. But, like all essentially punitive legislation, it was short-sighted and in practice has proved economically disastrous, for the United Fruit Company, at which it was primarily aimed, is steadily reducing its operations in Costa Rica and transferring them elsewhere, thereby depriving large numbers of natives of employment and the government of one of its chief sources of revenue.

For years the United Fruit Company *was* Costa Rica. The story of how a little group of hard-headed, far-seeing Boston merchants obtained control of millions of fertile acres along Costa Rica's Caribbean seaboard, planted them to bananas and other fruits, imported black laborers from the West Indies by the tens of thousands, cleared away the jungle, built roads and railways and wharves and schools and hospitals and hotels, dredged and developed a fine harbor at Port Limón, launched a "Great White Fleet" to carry the products of its plantations to American markets, brought great numbers of tourists to Costa Rica by advertising the country's numerous attractions, financed filibusters or deported them, promoted or prevented revolutions; and of how an obscure business man named Zemurray, who had started his career by peddling fruit in the streets of New Orleans, gradually acquired a controlling interest in the company, ousted the smug New Englanders who had founded it, and made himself master of its vast "banana



empire," is one of the wonder-tales of commercial history.

Racial and color questions are practically nonexistent in Costa Rica, for the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants, particularly in the salubrious highlands, are of pure Spanish descent. The Negro population, consisting of blacks brought from Jamaica and the other British West Indian islands to work on the banana plantations, is confined to the lowlands along the Caribbean coast. And the aboriginal Indians are almost extinct.

Little affected by immigration since the close of the colonial period, the whites have nevertheless steadily increased in numbers and have apparently lost little vigor under the tropical sun—doubtless because they live on the high plateau, where the heat is tempered by the altitude. The original stock was mainly from Andalusia and Galicia, and this sturdy peasantry now makes up the bulk of the small landowners and also of the laborers on the coffee plantations, thus giving Costa Rica a hardy, industrious, law-abiding, Caucasian middle class which in the other Central American countries is almost nonexistent.

The aristocracy consists for the most part of planters, whose coffee and cacao *beneficios* are in some cases miniature kingdoms. They are a cultured, hospitable, and very charming folk and lead an existence which, I imagine, resembles that led by the planters of the Old South. Many of them have handsome town houses in San José where they entertain magnificently. It is this class which supports the luxurious Union Club, the race-meets, the theater, and the opera. As coffee not only

yields generous financial returns—at least in normal times—to those who grow it scientifically, but also permits of long vacations, the planters and their families spend a considerable part of each year abroad, usually in Paris or Madrid. The men have their clothes made by London tailors; the women patronize the modistes of the Rue Saint-Honoré and the Rue de la Paix; they commute between their *fincas* and the capital in high-powered, high-priced cars; they import throughbred racehorses from Chile or Peru; their children are nearly always educated abroad. Consequently San José, with a population of only about 40,000, has a society which, if small, is as cultured, sophisticated, and delightful as any in the world.

The peasant women of Costa Rica struck me as being better-looking than those of the same class in any other Caribbean country. This is probably due to the fact that most of them are of pure Spanish descent, whereas the peasantry of the other republics have large admixtures of Indian or Negro blood. Not only are the Costa Rican women individually better-looking, but the proportion of good-looking women is greater. Having never known tight clothing or tight shoes, they move as easily and naturally as a gazelle. They are accustomed to carrying heavy burdens on their heads, and this gives to all of them when they stand or walk an erect carriage and a fearless uplifting of the head. Their fine dark eyes have the shy, mournful expression of a deer or a collie dog, but this is not a sign of secret sorrow; it merely indicates dumbness.

The shopgirls of San José are as pretty and pert and

chic as those of an American city. They wear silk stockings and are daintily shod and pattern their clothes on those shown in the American fashion magazines and tint their finger nails and use vermilion lip-stick. The lace mantillas and high tortoiseshell combs which we associate with the women of Spanish America are as obsolete as pompadours and bustles in the United States. The time to see the shopgirls of San José at their best is on a Sunday, when they stroll round and round the plaza, their dark, mischievous eyes flashing challenges at the young bloods of the town, who never address them, however—at least in public. Though I should guess that they are no more moral than the girls of other Latin countries, they have the reputation of carrying on their *affaires d'amour* with great discretion.

Of all the Caribbean countries save only Guatemala, Costa Rica is the most pictorial. At every turn one comes upon picture postcard scenes. It is a land of vivid colors—bright blue skies, emerald-green plantations, dark green forests, amethyst-and-purple volcanoes, rose-pink houses, high white walls over which bougainvillea pours in crimson torrents, gardens scarlet with hibiscus, crotons, and poinsettia, cream-colored oxen with bright red fringes and tassels between their spreading horns, oxcarts whose enormous wheels are painted in all the colors of the rainbow.

I was so enchanted with the wealth of color that, the night before my departure, I asked the American military attaché, Major Harris, whose guest I was, if there was in San José a native artist from whom I could purchase a picture of a characteristic Costa Rican scene. He

knew of such a man and telephoned him. Yes, the artist said, he had a number of paintings, but, as his studio was unlighted, he could not show them to me until morning. As the plane was leaving at daybreak I insisted on meeting him at his studio, light or no light, that evening. I used up a box of matches in examining his pictures and ended by buying two of them. I should be ashamed to confess how little they cost me. They are not masterpieces, but they serve to remind me of some very happy days spent in a country filled with color and sunlight, whose people seem reasonably prosperous and contented, where life slips by like a placid river, and where it is always spring.

In flying from San José to Managua it is easy to visualize the proposed Nicaragua Canal, for the region which would be traversed by such a waterway is spread below one like a map. The plane flies directly over Lake Nicaragua, one hundred and ten miles long and forty wide, and you can see the little San Juan River which connects this great inland body of water with the Caribbean, and the narrow neck of land, barely a score of miles across, which separates it from the Pacific.

By the terms of the Bryan-Chamorro Treaty in 1916 the United States acquired the option on a canal route through Nicaragua and a site for a naval base on the Gulf of Fonseca, as well as title to the Corn Islands, off the Mosquito Coast, which would command the eastern entrance of the canal. For this we paid Nicaragua three million dollars. Surveys were made by army engineers, who in 1931 presented a favorable report. But, with the

depression at its nadir, it was not an auspicious moment for enlisting public interest in the project. Though Lake Nicaragua is one hundred and ten feet above sea-level, making necessary an elaborate system of locks, the other engineering difficulties are not as formidable as those which were encountered on the Isthmus, and, in all probability, a Nicaragua canal will eventually be built. But it is bound to prove an enormously costly undertaking and will probably not be realized until some time in the distant future.

That portion of Nicaragua seen from a plane is desolate and monotonous, with none of the scenic beauty, freshness, or color of Costa Rica. The entire eastern half of the country is low, hot, humid and malarious, the Caribbean seaboard being called with great appropriateness the Mosquito Coast. Not because of its swarms of voracious Culicidae, however, but from the Misskito Indians, a degenerate and semi-savage race in whose veins is mixed the blood of the aboriginal inhabitants, West Indian Negroes, and buccaneers.

The Nicaraguan jungle forms an almost impenetrable barrier of rank tropical vegetation, the trees and undergrowth being so interlaced with lianas and other trailing vines that it is impossible to see more than a few feet in any direction. In it prevails a permanent and oppressive gloom, for little light penetrates the thick canopy of green overhead. The swamps are infested with snakes, lizards, scorpions, fleas, ticks, mosquitoes, and other unwholesome insects; bathing in the rivers is made hazardous by alligators and in the coastal waters by sharks. The rainfall in this region is incredible. It averages 255

inches a year, but at Bluefields, on the Mosquito Coast, there has been recorded a precipitation of 297 inches—nearly twenty-five feet! Forming the backbone of the country is a chain of semi-active volcanoes which offer an ever-present menace, particularly as the eruptions are frequently accompanied by violent earthquakes. The eruption of Momotombo in March, 1931, and the accompanying earthquake completely destroyed Managua and caused an appalling loss of life.

Nicaragua is the largest country in Central America, rich in forests, minerals, and lands suitable for agriculture. But its natural resources remain largely undeveloped, for it is one of the most backward of the Latin-American states, with only two or three short railways and few roads. This is due in part to the indolence, apathy, and ignorance of its inhabitants, of whom fully ninety per cent are of Indian or mixed blood and at least sixty per cent are illiterate, and in part to the country's unenviable record of political turbulence, which has set the hands of progress back many years.

Ever since 1821, when Nicaragua declared its independence, its history has been a continuous series of insurrections, revolutions, and changes of government by violence. From 1855 to 1857 it was ruled by William Walker, whose régime, however dictatorial and high-handed, was certainly preferable to the anarchy which preceded and followed it. In 1912, the country being on the verge of bankruptcy and exhausted by years of civil strife, the government, in order to avert drastic action by Nicaragua's foreign creditors, invited the United States to step in and set things in order. In compliance

with this invitation an expeditionary force of American marines was despatched to Nicaragua and remained there for thirteen years. This provoked such a furious storm of denunciation from the radical section of the American press, from anti-imperialists and professional pacifists, and from certain disgruntled Nicaraguan politicians that in 1925 the marines were withdrawn.

Our transports were hardly hull-down upon the horizon, however, before another revolution began, bloodier and more destructive than any of the preceding ones. This was embarrassing for the critics of the State Department, who had loudly proclaimed that if the heel of the foreign oppressor were removed the Nicaraguans would enjoy prosperity and peace. The marines were ordered back to Nicaragua, some five thousand strong, and remained there another seven years. As in Haiti and the Dominican Republic they suppressed banditry, established law and order, cleaned up the towns, built roads, organized an efficient national constabulary, conducted an honest election—something that Nicaragua had never known before—and set the country on its feet. A Nicaraguan named Augustus Caesar Sandino and his followers for some years carried on a desultory guerrilla warfare but were eventually crushed. Whether our intervention in Nicaragua was justified depends upon one's point of view. If you believe in the maintenance of law and order and in honest politics, then it was; if you maintain that self-government, however bad, is preferable to decent government and that patriotism justifies banditry and murder, then it was not.

Managua, the Nicaraguan capital, is one of the most

unattractive and depressing cities in Central America. It is built on a khaki-colored plain of sun-dried earth which is as arid as a baseball diamond; its plazas and parks and many of its streets are of sun-dried earth; the majority of its houses are miserable hovels of sun-dried earth, and many of the others are wooden shacks with roofs of corrugated iron; the fortified hill of La Loma which commands the city is a great mound of sun-dried earth; the trees are dejected and lifeless and shed dust instead of dew; even the red sandstone cathedral and Palacio Nacional and the squat buildings of the business districts have a dingy, depressed, discouraged look; and over all is a mantle of dust which the faintest breeze stirs into a yellow, suffocating haze.

It is only fair to say, however, that I saw Managua under peculiarly unfavorable conditions, for it had not recovered from the great eruption and earthquake, a large part of the city being still in ruins, and the departure of the American marines, who had spent their pay freely, as seafaring men do, had brought on an acute financial depression. Indeed, to be quite candid, I have no business writing about Nicaragua at all, for I did not see enough of the country to judge it fairly or to give much weight to my opinions.



## XV

### Dictators, Filibusters, and Soldiers of Fortune

AMONG my fellow passengers in the plane from Cristobal were a bride and groom. They couldn't have been mistaken for anything else. From the way they looked at each other and openly held hands it was perfectly obvious that they had recently been married.

The girl was an American—not beautiful, but very attractive in a fresh, wholesome fashion, with frank, friendly eyes and honey-colored hair and a nice complexion. Her husband was her exact opposite: of the romantic type, very lean and dark, with black hair which looked as though it had been varnished. Though he spoke colloquial English, with only a trace of accent, he was unmistakably a Latin.

Casual conversation is difficult in a plane; but the two stopped over at San José, and the day after our arrival I came upon the bride in the patio of the Gran, evidently waiting for her husband. I bowed and made some inane remark about the weather, and we fell to chatting, as Americans do when they meet in a foreign country. I think she was glad to talk to a fellow countryman, for she quickly became confidential, displaying a naïve frankness which was very winning.

I had guessed right; they were on their honeymoon. She was from a small town somewhere in the Middle West, in Iowa or Nebraska, and her people, I gathered, were well-to-do farmers. Her husband was a Honduran. They had met at the state university. It was easy to understand how the handsome, romantic-looking young Latin had quickly captured the girl's imagination. They had married immediately upon graduation—rather against the wishes of the girl's family, I suspected—and were now on their way to Honduras, where they were to make their home with the husband's parents.

"Aren't you going to find it pretty lonely in Honduras?" I asked. "Not many white women there." I quickly corrected myself. "Not many American women, I mean."

"Oh," she cried enthusiastically, "it's going to be such an interesting life that I shan't mind. You see, Leon's father owns a big hacienda, and Leon is going to help run it. That is why he went to an American university—to learn all about agriculture. He is planning to buy a tractor and a small herd of Holstein cattle. There are lots of saddle horses on the ranch, and Leon says that orchids grow wild in Honduras, and there is a little river where we can go swimming. I won't have time to be lonely because we shall be so busy doing things. I imagine that it is going to be like living on one of those old Southern plantations."

She glowed with happiness and anticipation.

Now, I knew that there were such haciendas as she pictured in Central America. In fact, I had been a guest on some of them. But they belonged to old and wealthy

and aristocratic families. Whereas Leon, though a nice enough young fellow, just didn't strike me as being of that class.

The next time we met was at the Managua airport. Like myself they were waiting for the northbound plane. The girl nodded to me brightly.

"We are almost home," she said. "The plane is making a special stop to let us off near the hacienda. Leon has wired to his parents to be sure and meet us. I am crazy to see them. I imagine his father is a very handsome, distinguished person, a sort of grandee, with a pointed beard and courtly manners. His mother will probably wear a mantilla and a high tortoiseshell comb. Leon tells me that I must be prepared to find her quite old-fashioned."

Shortly after crossing the Honduran frontier the plane came down at a field not listed on the schedule—evidently a flag-stop, for it was no more than a space of sun-baked soil hemmed in by jungle. Before a shack roofed with corrugated iron a little knot of people were waiting in the hot sunshine. The purser flung open the door; the young husband scrambled out and, without waiting to help his wife, flung himself into the arms of the elderly couple who had rushed forward to greet him. "*Mía madre! Mi padre!*" I heard him exclaim.

His mother, a stooped, wrinkled, meek-faced little woman with a black shawl drawn over her head, was beyond question a full-blood Indian. The father, I judged, was a half-caste, though it was more likely that he had only a quarter of Spanish blood in his veins. His shirt, open at the neck, revealed a hirsute chest; his white

cotton trousers were shapeless but immaculately clean; his bare feet were thrust into rawhide sandals; on his head was a straw sombrero as big as an umbrella. His naturally dark skin had been tanned to the color of mahogany by the sun, and he needed shaving. He was, I surmised, a prosperous peasant-farmer, owner of a few thousand head of scrawny, tick-ridden cattle and a few thousand acres of sun-scorched land. But certainly not a *hacendado*, a member of the landed gentry.

The sight of her husband's parents must have wrecked the girl's illusions, but she went bravely through the ordeal of meeting them. Two or three ragged *mozos* took possession of her luggage and lashed it to the backs of waiting mules. The new brown suitcase and the shiny patent-leather hatbox and the miniature wardrobe trunk seemed pathetically out of place in such a setting.

I had alighted to smoke a cigarette. The bride came across and shook hands.

"I'm so glad to have met you," she said. "Good-bye and good luck!"

"Good luck to *you*!" I said.

As the plane banked to gain altitude I could see the little cavalcade, the girl and her husband and his parents mounted on wiry native ponies, the *mozos* on mules behind, setting out up a narrow yellow road which led straight into the steaming jungle.

Tegucigalpa is ensconced in a mountain valley, thirty-four hundred feet above the level of the sea, which is completely hemmed in by the great peaks of the Cordillera system. Passengers disembark at Tocontin, a

wretched little hamlet on the western side of the mountains, for the Honduran capital is some twoscore miles off the route followed by the Pan-American planes. With the exception of Lhasa in Tibet and Katmandu in Nepál, it is the most inaccessible capital in the world, and it is the only capital in the western hemisphere which cannot be reached by railway.

From Tocontin there are two routes to Tegucigalpa. One is by air, in an ancient, single-motored plane operated by a local concern which has no connection with Pan-American Airways. The other is by car over a narrow, winding mountain road which is extremely dangerous under the most favorable conditions and is virtually impassable during the rains. I was told that, so far as my chances of arriving safely were concerned, there was little to choose between the two routes, for ominous clouds hung low over the Cordillera and the precipice-bordered highway was perilously "slick" from recent heavy rains. On both routes there had been numerous accidents: several motor cars had plunged over the precipices; planes had crashed or been forced down. These reports were not encouraging. But, I reminded myself, if I had listened to all the calamity-howlers I should never have got farther than Jersey City.

"I'll toss for it," I decided. "If it comes heads I'll go by road; tails and I'll risk the plane." Tails it was. Even so I was tempted to abandon the idea of visiting Tegucigalpa and go on. For, to be quite honest, I was going there mainly because I had always been intrigued by its name. But it was too late. While I was trying to make up my mind the Pan-American plane had gone. And I cer-

tainly had no intention of spending four days in such a dump as Tocontin.

Like so many places with outlandish names, Tegucigalpa is extremely disappointing. To begin with, it is only a small town, with a population of not more than forty thousand. It is, moreover, a very poor and squalid town, wholly devoid of architectural distinction, though it is said to have been a place of considerable importance in Aztec times. Its rough streets run up hill and down. From the houses and gardens on the slopes of the Pecacho the town drops down to the business quarter; from here there is a second and more abrupt drop to the Choluteca, a narrow, shallow stream in which native washerwomen stand knee-deep all day long and on the rocks scrub and beat and pound and generally mistreat the garments which have been entrusted to them. Yet theirs is the only suggestion of energy to be seen. The other inhabitants seem surfeited with leisure and irritable with boredom. Doubtless that is why there are so many shootings. Every one, from President to peon, goes armed.

Tegucigalpa is set like a fortress on the country's military crest, with mountain ramparts rising all around. It would have been easy to choose a far more accessible site for a capital—Comayagua, for example, which is in the center of a broad rich valley opening toward both oceans. But Tegucigalpa was selected for military reasons, and, from a strategic point of view, the selection was a wise one, for the encircling mountains rise straight up and seem to have been placed there so that the troops which hold them can drop shells into the city sprawling

at their feet. Despite the strength of its natural defences, however, the place has changed hands many times.

As the vast majority of the country's presidents have either been assassinated or ousted by revolution, the presidential palace likewise occupies a strategic position. It is built on the edge of the high river bank, its semi-circular entrance, heavily guarded by sentries, facing the upper portion of the town, which can be swept by machine-guns. At the back is a lofty, curving rampart which rises sheer from the river, so that it cannot be taken from behind.

There is little of interest to see in the town—a shabby Palacio Nacional, the usual cathedral, a university, a huge grim prison, a cemetery which is a forest of marble carved in hideous designs, streets lined with two-story shops stocked with inferior merchandise, their interiors cool and dim, and a plaza in the center of which, astride a prancing bronze horse, sits an effigy of the country's national hero, Francisco Morazán. The most interesting thing about Tegucigalpa, when all is said and done, is that everything not fashioned from wood or dug from the ground was brought in on the backs of mules or by motor-truck, for, as I have remarked, there is no railway. The great statue of Morazán, cast in Italy, was transported over the mountains in pieces by mule-train.

Of all the Central American republics, Honduras is the most backward, the most poverty-stricken. Its principal industries are banana-growing and cattle-raising. Though it has considerable mineral resources, there are only two mining companies. This lack of development is due in part to the mountainous nature of the country, in part

to its sparse population, but mainly to an almost continuous series of wars and revolutions. The people live in rude thatched huts set in clearings in the bush, with little cornfields and gardens, a few animals and chickens. The pure Spanish element is very small, the vast majority of the population being part Indian, while in certain departments are purely Indian towns whose inhabitants speak no Spanish and live almost as primitively as their aboriginal ancestors.

Except for the strips of swamp along the coasts, the country is a tableland, its series of elevated plateaus broken by fertile valleys and broad plains. Across it, from southeast to northwest, stretches the Cordillera, one peak, the *Montaña de Selaque*, being more than ten thousand feet high. Bananas and other tropical fruits flourish in the eastern lowlands; there is fine pasturage on the uplands.

There is nothing green in Honduras that is not alive with creatures that creep and crawl and bite and sting. You cannot sit on the grass or walk through the underbrush of forest without myriads of insects of various kinds attaching themselves to your clothes or your person. The most irritating is the chigoe, a species of jigger, which burrows under the skin, forming small red sores which quickly become swollen and inflamed. It usually takes several weeks to get rid of them. The scrawny condition of the cattle is due to ticks, which are even more pestilential in the highlands than mosquitoes are on the coast. The towns swarm with fleas, ants, lice, and bedbugs, and the only way to sleep in comfort is in a hammock—in which case your body has assumed the shape



of a U by morning—or by setting the feet of your bed in saucers filled with petroleum. Then there are the great vampire-bats, loathsome creatures which attach themselves to the necks of horses, cattle, and donkeys, and suck the blood until their victims are so weakened that they scarcely can stand. I was told that the vampire-bats sometimes tap the veins of sleeping men, though as to this I have no actual knowledge. But it did not make me sleep any sounder to know that they were about.

Political turbulence has been the curse of Honduras. Its history for the past three-quarters of a century has been written in blood, for tens of thousands of its people have been killed in wars and revolutions. In 1860 the country was invaded by William Walker, who, surrendered to the Hondurans by a British naval commander on whose ship he had sought sanctuary, was executed at Trujillo. In 1863 Honduras became involved in war with Salvador and Nicaragua. From 1871 to 1874 it was at war with Salvador and Guatemala. In 1906, this time with Salvador for an ally, it again fought Guatemala. In 1910 there was a revolt led by General Villadares, who seized Amapala. The following year ex-President Bonilla started a revolution which was ended by American intervention. In 1918 Honduras declared war on Germany, thus becoming one of the Allies and an original member of the League of Nations. In 1919 General Gutierrez came into power by means of a revolution, and though he succeeded in maintaining a military dictatorship for six years, repeated attempts were made to overthrow him. In 1931 an attempt to oust President Colindres was crushed only after six weeks of fighting.

The country has been occupied several times, for short periods, by American marines. The truth is that in Honduras revolution is the national pastime, like baseball in the United States and bullfighting in Spain. The people apparently enjoy the excitement of an insurrection and feel that they are being deprived of a legitimate pleasure when none is going on.

Ever since the days of William Walker, Honduras has been a magnet for filibusters and soldiers of fortune. Of these the most celebrated have been Lee Christmas, Guy Maloney and General Jeffries, the last, I believe, still holding a commission in the Honduran army. For years the name of Lee Christmas was one to conjure with in Middle America. Fearless, reckless, incorruptible, a genius as an organizer, and a born leader of men, he was a sort of demigod to the Central Americans, a Napoleon, a Jeb Stuart, and a Lawrence of Arabia combined. No revolution was complete without him, and victory invariably alighted on the banners of the side of which he was in command. About his early life little is known save that he was a railway engineer in the States, ran afoul of the law, and departed unobtrusively, between two days, to carve out a career for himself in Central America.

His most famous exploit took place at Puerto Cortés, on the Caribbean coast of Honduras, where he wiped out an entire rebel army single-handed. The insurrectos held the town, which is built on a narrow spit of sand connected by a railway bridge with the mainland. They were in force and well armed, and things looked black for the government.

"I can clean up that outfit," Christmas told the Honduran commander, "if you will let me do it my own way."

"You are welcome to try, *mi amigo*," the other assured him. "But how many men will you require?"

"Hell!" said the American. "I don't need any men. All I need is an engine."

Around a curve in the jungle, a few hundred yards from the end of the bridge, Christmas sat in the cab of a locomotive, steam up, waiting for the rebel advance to begin. Presently the insurrectos started to cross the bridge, the wooden trestle shaking beneath their tread. When the head of the column had nearly reached the mainland side, and the narrow structure was crowded with marching men, Christmas tossed away his cigarette, opened the throttle and, with a terrifying shriek of the whistle, roared down upon the invaders. It was all over in scarcely more time than it takes to tell about it. Scores of the insurrectos were crushed beneath the wheels of the iron juggernaut; many of those who sought to escape by flinging themselves into the water were drowned. The rebel army was destroyed, the revolution smashed; and the ex-engineer eventually became commander-in-chief of the Honduran army.

On the Pacific side of Central America, hemmed in by Honduras and Guatemala, is the little Republic of El Salvador. The smallest of the Central American states and the only one which has no Atlantic seaboard and no banana belt, it is at the same time the most prosperous

and the most progressive. And it is the most densely inhabited area of its size on the American continent.

It received its name—"The Savior"—from its conqueror, Pedro de Alvarado, the cruelest of the conquistadors, of whom it has been said that he loved no human being and that his chief delight was to kill. Because of him the Indian element is almost negligible in El Salvador, for he mercilessly exterminated the aborigines.

A more appropriate name for the country would have been "Land of Fire," for its high plateau, half a mile above sea level, is thickly studded with volcanoes, both extinct and active. Some of the latter remain quiescent for years and then burst forth with frightful fury, usually accompanied by violent earthquakes which frequently cause enormous loss of life and leave whole towns in ruins. The scene of one of the most extraordinary of these eruptions was Lake Ilopango, a placid and beautiful body of water which suddenly became a raging maelstrom. From the vortex rose a volcanic cone one hundred and fifty feet high, this birth of a volcano being accompanied by seismic convulsions which rocked the capital to its foundations.

Though the country produces cacao, tobacco, indigo, sugar, rubber, and balsam, its soil, enriched by decomposed lava, is singularly adapted to the cultivation of coffee, which was introduced in 1840 by a Brazilian schoolmaster and is now El Salvador's chief source of wealth, constituting 90 per cent of its exports.

When you cross from Honduras to El Salvador you find yourself not only in another country but, to all intents and purposes, in another world. The peoples of

the two republics speak the same language and have the same historical background, but there all resemblance ends. El Salvador is as progressive and prosperous as Honduras is backward and poverty-stricken. The difference between their respective capitals is the difference between a modern city and rude frontier town. The Hondurans live for the most part in squalid, isolated huts or villages; the Salvadoreans, in trim, prosperous-looking towns which are so close together that if you light a cigarette in driving through one of them it will be only half-smoked when you reach the next one. A hundred years ahead of Honduras' miserable roads are El Salvador's fine highways, bordered by hedges of hibiscus or giant cacti and shaded by enormous ceibas. Flocks of bright green parakeets chatter in the tree-tops; now and then a small brown monkey, like the graceful young man on the flying trapeze, swings agilely from bough to bough.

The capital, San Salvador, founded nearly a century before the Pilgrims set foot on Plymouth Rock, has been destroyed by earthquakes seven times. But each time the people reared it anew from its ruins, and it stands today as a monument to the fearlessness and perseverance of its inhabitants, who dwell the year round within the shadow of a dozen menacing volcanoes. It is a very gay and pleasant little city, though not easy to keep clean because of the loose volcanic dust which is sifted over everything by the wind. The public buildings are well kept and quite imposing; there are a number of large public schools of concrete, designed with a view to obtaining a maximum of light and ventilation; a national

theater; a palatial club; numerous smart and expensive shops in whose windows are displayed all manner of *articles de luxe*, mainly imported from Europe; a fine plaza bordered by sidewalk cafés, where well-dressed, prosperous-looking men sip coffee or *apéritifs* at little tables and discuss politics and sports and the latest coffee quotations.

There are three classes in El Salvador. The upper consists of a limited and very exclusive aristocracy, wealthy, educated, traveled, cultured, and professedly of pure Spanish descent. Shopkeepers and small landowners, most of them of mixed blood but some descended on both sides from Spanish peasant immigrants, compose the bulk of the bourgeoisie. At the bottom of the social scale is a mass of peons, tillers of the soil, poor, ignorant, and suffering from various economic disabilities.

It is claimed that, as a result of the distribution of communal lands among the middle and lower classes a quarter of a century ago, 75 per cent of the coffee is grown by small landowners. This may be so. But it is also said that the country is run by about thirty old Creole families, just as the Hawaiian Islands were run for years by a little group descended from the early settlers. The latter statement is unquestionably true.

This moneyed class live in the height of luxury in huge town houses or on their great estates. They send their children to school in England or France or Switzerland. They make frequent trips to Europe and spend their money lavishly at Biarritz and Aix-les-Bains and Cannes and Monte Carlo. The women have their measurements kept by Paris couturières and have their ward-

robes replenished regularly. The men get their clothes in Bond Street or Savile Row. They subscribe to the foreign edition of the London *Times*, *L'illustration*, and *La Vie Parisienne*; import thoroughbreds from England and South America; drink Scotch whisky and French liqueurs; play golf for five dollars a hole and bridge for a cent a point. Some of their entertainment, such as balls and coming-out parties, would cause an American millionaire to blink with astonishment. They are proud of their lineage, their cosmopolitanism, their precise Castilian and their finished manners. Like the old Creole families of New Orleans, they live, and have lived for years, in feudal dignity and careless luxury.

Foreigners, particularly *Americanos del Norte*, are rarely admitted to the upper circles of Salvadorean society, but, thanks to the kindness of friends in Washington's diplomatic set, I received more invitations than I could accept, for Salvadoreans of the upper class are very hospitable—provided you are vouched for. A visit on one of the great coffee *fincas* proved to be one of the most enjoyable experiences I had in Central America. My host was the son of a former president of El Salvador and had been educated at an English public school—Eton, I think. His young and beautiful wife was the daughter of a former president of Guatemala. She had been educated at a fashionable girls' school in Paris. Life on the *finsa* was a combination of that in a Long Island country house, a French château and on a Southern plantation before the Civil War. I never had to ring for a servant because my wishes were invariably anticipated, which is the essence of perfect service. In the garage

were Rolls-Royces and Renaults and Hispana-Suizas. When I rode it was on a thoroughbred stallion which had once won the Peruvian Derby. The dinner was served by liveried servants on crested porcelain, and the glasses were filled with Château-Yquem and Irroy of a famous year and Napoleon brandy. In spite of all this luxury—and I am free to confess that I enjoyed it, just as Harry Franck enjoys knocking about on foot and sleeping in peasants' hovels—my hosts were as simple and genuine and easy-mannered as though they were of the bourgeoisie instead of belonging to one of the most exclusive aristocracies in the world.

Some one—Carleton Beals, I think—has remarked that the two main contours of Salvadorean life are the fort and the cathedral. Certainly soldiers are omnipresent. Though they wear ill-fitting uniforms of blue cotton trimmed with white braid and are generally barefoot, they are very conscious of their importance. Next to the little group of big landowners to whom I have already alluded, and to the army, the most powerful influence in El Salvador is the Catholic Church. For the Salvadoreans of all classes are deeply religious and, particularly among the peasantry, the priests exercise enormous influence. The most conspicuous feature of every home, however humble, is a little shrine with a statue or a picture of the Virgin and candles burning in front of it, and some of the great houses have private chapels in which the family and servants attend Mass.

Salvadoreans of the ruling class will assure you that the peons, who form the bulk of the population, are prosperous and contented. It is probably true that they



are more prosperous than the peons of the other Central American countries (though that isn't saying much); but whether they are contented is open to doubt. If the population was contented the government would hardly be a military dictatorship maintained by force.

In 1932 the big landowners and the bourgeoisie were frightened out of their wits by a communist outbreak which almost certainly would have ended in the overthrow of the government and the establishment of a soviet state had not President Menéndez crushed it ruthlessly before it could get going. Figures differ widely as to the number of Reds, or alleged Reds, who were executed by firing parties or mowed down *en masse* by machine-guns, but one of our military attachés told me that in his report to the War Department he had estimated the number of dead at fifteen thousand. This incredible figure was borne out, moreover, by certain foreign diplomats with whom I discussed the affair. Every one agreed that it amounted to a wholesale massacre, in which many perfectly innocent people fell victims to the ferocity of a frightened government, and that the streets of towns and villages all over the republic were carpeted with corpses.

The individual responsible for these harsh methods was President Maximilian Menéndez, who had achieved power by methods which the American Government did not approve and whose administration it had refused to recognize. Though by way of protest we had withdrawn our minister, we had left a chargé d'affaires, and he took me to call on President Menéndez. For safety's sake he was living temporarily in the enormous feudal

fort, with its grim towers and loopholed walls, which overshadows the town. The place was surrounded by barbed-wire entanglements, packed with troops and bristling with machine-guns.

The President proved to be a pleasant, mild-mannered man who looked like neither a soldier nor a dictator. As a matter of fact, he was originally a school teacher, or perhaps I should say a professor, and has had no military training.

Tactfulness forbade me asking the President how many persons had been executed as a result of the uprising, but I did venture to inquire how it had been possible to organize a nation-wide insurrection in a country as small as Salvador, where the government controls all means of communication. His explanation was interesting. According to him, the plot originated in Moscow, in the Latin-American division of Komintern, and the truth of this contention seems to have been pretty definitely established by captured documents, some of which emanated from communist headquarters in New York.

Not daring to use the mails, the telephone, or the telegraph, the communist leaders communicated with each other and disseminated their propaganda through the medium of the Syrian and Armenian peddlers who trudge the roads of Central America, their cheap wares in packs on their backs. Many of these peddlers, it developed, were secret emissaries of Moscow. Among the goods which they carried for sale to the peasantry were little plaster figurines, some representing the Virgin, others the better known saints, called *santos*. These little religious figures were hollow and consequently were

admirable hiding-places for tightly rolled strips of onion-skin paper on which were written the plans for the rising. As a matter of fact, this ingenious system of communication was never discovered until the rising had been suppressed, when the suspicions of the authorities were aroused by finding *santos*, sometimes still containing their incriminating messages, on the persons of prisoners and dead men.

The whole affair was organized so skilfully and in such complete secrecy that the government was very nearly caught napping. That it was warned in the nick of time was due to American Military Intelligence, which maintains in Latin America a secret service unsurpassed for efficiency by any similar organization in the world. For, when it comes to knowing what is going on below the Rio Grande, Uncle Sam is by no means the benevolent, blundering, lackadaisical old coot which our European friends assume. The officers of G-2, which is that section of the General Staff dealing with military intelligence, are as intimately familiar with the dark underworld of Latin-American politics as the G-men of the Department of Justice are with the ramifications of the criminal world at home.

San Salvador is a junction-point for two of the Pan-American air services. One strikes northwestward, via Guatemala, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and Vera Cruz, to the City of Mexico. The other leads straight north to Belize, the capital of British Honduras, to Mérida in Yucatan, and thence across the Gulf of Mexico to Cuba. As I was going to Yucatan later on, I chose the former

route, though it necessitated my missing British Honduras. This I did not mind, however, for I had been to Belize some years before and had not the slightest desire to return.

The town, which is almost at sea-level, stands at the mouth of the Belize River, separated by miles of swamps from the mainland. In 1931 half of it was wiped out by a hurricane, tidal wave, and conflagration. Mosquito-ridden and malarial, the place radiates heat like a railway station stove and is as humid as a Turkish bath. But, in spite of its situation and sporadic outbreaks of cholera and yellow fever, it is not as unhealthy as might be assumed, for the British insist on cleanliness and sanitation. The bulk of its inhabitants are Negroes, Indians, and half-breeds who live in wooden shacks set on piles above the ground as a precaution against floods, fever, snakes, and insects. There are a few score whites, including a handful of British officials, some traders and banana-buyers, and a homesick American vice-consul. When the State Department wishes to try out a new recruit it sends him to Belize, on the theory that if he sticks it out there for a couple of years he can stand anything.

With the aid of a well-stocked cellar, electric fans, and plenty of quinine the governor of British Honduras manages to exist in tolerable comfort in Government House, a large frame building, guarded by haughty black sentries, shaded by palms, which looks out across bright green lawns to the sparkling Caribbean. From a tall staff a Union Jack droops listlessly; there is not enough air stirring to rustle the palm-fronds; a white tennis court lies baking in the sun. But, despite the heat,

life at Government House is characterized by formality and stiffness, for wherever the English go they take the atmosphere of England with them. Even in this forgotten colony, tucked away between the swamps of Guatemala and the jungles of Yucatan, a more or less successful attempt is made to observe the forms and traditions of Old England. The colored policemen wear the black-and-white striped sleeve-bands of the London bobby; the Anglican bishop clings to his shovel-hat, buttoned gaiters, and apron; in the stuffy courtroom justices and barristers perspire in wigs and gowns.

Nature seems to have held a grudge against Guatemala, for volcanoes and earthquakes have driven the seat of government from place to place, the present city of Guatemala being the third capital of that name. The first capital, now known as Ciudad Vieja, or Almalonga, was founded in 1542 and overwhelmed thirty-odd years later by a volcanic eruption. The second capital, now known as Antigua, was almost completely destroyed by an earthquake in 1773. With these calamities in mind, the site of the third and present capital was selected with great care, on an isolated tableland, nearly five thousand feet above the sea, surrounded on three sides by deep barrancas. As there are no volcanoes in the immediate vicinity, it was hoped that the new seat of government would escape the fate of its predecessors, a hope which was weakened by the destructive temblor of 1874 and blasted when the city was destroyed in 1918. The government engineers having given up hope of finding an earthquakeless zone anywhere in the republic, the city

was rebuilt on the same site and according to the same plan.

Consequently, Guatemala holds little of historical or architectural interest; but it is worth visiting because it is the largest city and the most important commercial center in Central America. And it is the only Central American city which has railway communication with the outside world. It is the terminus of the railways which run southeast to San Salvador and northwest to Ayutla on the Mexican border, where connection is made with the National Railways of Mexico. And it is on the American-owned line which links San José on the Pacific with Puerto Barrios on the Caribbean. In course of time the Guatemalan railways will form a part of the great system designed to link the United States and Panama; but this has made little progress in recent years and I imagine that the International Highway, now in course of construction, will be completed first.

Guatemala City has several passable hotels and one, the Washington, that is first-class according to Central American standards; some substantial but gloomy-looking government buildings and a presidential mansion; a number of barracks which are really miniature forts; a cathedral noteworthy only because it has a black Virgin; a busy retail district whose shops are stocked with imported goods; and a huge native market which is as crowded, colorful, and fascinating as an Oriental bazaar.

Though a good deal of asphalt has been laid, many of the streets are still paved with two-feet-square flagstones. The low adobe houses, with grilled windows below and iron balconies above, are built shoulder-to-

shoulder close to the street, as is the Spanish fashion. They are calcimined pink, blue, purple, or yellow, but their colors have been mellowed to softer and more pleasing tones by sun and rain. Their doors are enormous, frequently twelve feet high, but for the sake of convenience a small door is usually cut in the larger one.

As is the case throughout Latin America, the houses turn toward the street unfriendly faces which give no hint of the pleasant, hospitable life within. The center of that life is the *jardín*, on which all the rooms open and to which in case of an earthquake every one in the household runs. It is filled with palms and banana trees and crotons; there is usually a pair of bright-plumaged macaws or some vivid green parakeets; and there is nearly always a fountain, generally made of native tiles, which are softer in tone, more interesting in design, and far more durable than those manufactured in Spain. In Guatemala, incidentally, houses for sale or rent are advertised not as fireproof but as earthquake-proof. Were I to live there, however, I should insist on one of fireproof construction, for the city, with a population of more than 100,000, has no fire department. If a building catches fire the occupant is promptly arrested and thrown into prison, and the place is frequently permitted to burn down. This, it is claimed, teaches the people to be careful with their cigarettes and matches, is good for the insurance companies, and helps the local power company by encouraging the use of electricity for lighting and cooking.

The one thing really worth seeing in Guatemala is the market, which not only covers an entire city square but

flows out into the adjacent streets. Here you will see more handsome women than in any one place in Central America, some of them beautiful creatures with magnificent figures, blue-black hair, large lustrous eyes, and smooth brown skins. Though displayed in the little booths and stalls is pretty much everything grown or made under the Central American sun, including a bewildering variety of tropical fruits and vegetables, the most interesting are the lengths of embroidered cottons made by the Indian women of the hill-towns. They are always in vivid colors, and the market blazes and scintillates and cascades with them. The best are woven with flat threads, colored with vegetable dyes, and worked in bold, primitive designs which are obviously of Mayan origin. In weave, color, workmanship, and design the embroidered cottons of Guatemala are vastly superior to the Mexican, but they come in short lengths, long enough for a pillow or table-cover but insufficient for a coat or gown, and it is extremely difficult to match them.

The slovenly little brown soldiers who are always tramping through the streets of Guatemala or drilling on the sun-baked parade grounds before the cuartels give the city a martial aspect and serve to remind one that the government of the country is, to all intents and purposes, a military dictatorship. Guatemala is accustomed to dictators, however; they have ruled the country almost uninterruptedly for almost a century.

It is hard to disabuse yourself of ideas formed during your childhood, and I had always pictured Guatemala as a country where assassinations and revolutions were as much a part of the national life as gangster murders



and labor disturbances are in the United States. This lurid conception was doubtless due to the fact that as a small boy I had known one of the most celebrated of the Guatemalan dictators, General José María Reyna Barrios, who spent a week or so at our home in up-state New York. He had the reputation of being a blood-thirsty and singularly cruel tyrant, but I, a lad in my early teens, found him a most kindly and entertaining person, who liked youngsters and knew how to get along with them. When my nose was broken in an accident he accompanied me to the hospital and while it was being set sat beside me and held my hand. Learning that I collected stamps, upon his return to his own country he sent me a complete set of Guatemalan stamps—an entire sheet of each denomination! The day before his departure he remarked that he wished to purchase some gifts for friends in Guatemala. My father told him that he could probably find something suitable at one of the local jewelers.

"I don't think a jeweler would have what I want," said the general. "A gunsmith is more in my line."

For his friends he purchased half a dozen pearl-handled Colt's revolvers; for himself a pair of Derringer pistols with barrels only a few inches long.

"I have a good many enemies in Guatemala," he explained, "so, when I receive visitors, I keep my back to the wall, my hands in my pocket, and a pistol in each hand."

The statement, made quite casually, gave me a tremendous thrill, but I imagine that my father thought it rather melodramatic. He changed his mind, however,

when, some time later, we read in the morning paper that our late guest had been assassinated in the palace in Guatemala City. The Derringers had been of no avail, for the assassin had gained access to the palace garden and shot the president through an open window. I told the story to President Ubico, the present ruler of Guatemala.

"Why sit in front of an open window?" he remarked, shrugging his shoulders. "If the room is too warm, turn on the electric fan."

The military adviser to the Guatemalan government and the commandant of the National Military Academy is an American cavalry officer, Lieutenant-Colonel John A. Considine. He was "loaned" to Guatemala by the War Department and holds the rank of major-general in the Guatemalan army. General Considine is one of the most picturesque figures in Central America. When I met him at the American Legation he had just come from some official function at the palace and was in full-dress uniform: a sky-blue coat with gold brandenburgs, cherry-colored breeches, patent leather boots and a gold-laced kepi. He looked as though he might have been playing the leading role in *The Chocolate Soldier*, but he is most emphatically not that kind of soldier.

When Considine took charge of the military academy, which for years had been under the supervision of European officers, its morale was close to the vanishing point. But in a few months, thanks to the American's irrepressible energy and contagious enthusiasm, it had become a very creditable imitation of West Point. Realizing that morale is very largely a matter of being well

dressed, and that colors which we consider gaudy appeal to the Latin American, he imported a quantity of English cloth, blue, green, and scarlet. Having discovered a one-time British regimental tailor who was living in the city, he set him to work making uniforms for the cadets. When the corps turned out for parade wearing the new uniforms for the first time, the capital went wild with pride and enthusiasm. And the cadets, most of them Indian or *mestizo* lads from the provinces, quickly justified public pride in them. Considine not only gave them smart uniforms, but fed them as they had never been fed before. I have rarely eaten at a better mess. Not until they were well clad and well fed did he really begin the task of making them into officers. Today they would do credit to any military school in the world. General Considine has proved himself not only a first-class drillmaster but a highly efficient administrator. President Ubico told me that during his first three months as commandant of the military academy, the American had saved the Guatemalan government fifty thousand dollars.

Quezaltenango, the second largest city in Guatemala, is named after the quetzal, the long-tailed bird of gorgeous plumage which is the country's national symbol and was regarded by the ancient Mayas as a deity. Its name has also been given to the principal unit of the national currency. The town is perched in the high Sierra, one hundred miles northwest of Guatemala City and eight thousand feet above the level of the sea. Like most mountain towns it is a labyrinth of steep and winding streets and narrow, tortuous alleys flanked by

high walls; its low, flat-roofed houses are built of tobacco-brown lava rock quarried from the slopes of the near-by volcanoes, whose eruptions have more than once all but destroyed the place. Dominating everything else is the cathedral, with an ornate façade and overdecorated interior, on whose high altar a few years ago Vice-President Flores was torn limb from limb by a mob of infuriated women whooped on by the priests—presumably because of his extremely liberal religious views. The town is gay with color, for it is the trading center of the Quiché Indians of that region, who wear what amounts to a national costume and are skilled at handicrafts. Consequently, the local market is a brilliant and fascinating spot. But, if your time is limited, I question whether there is enough of interest in Quezaltenango to justify so long a trip.

Thirty miles from Guatemala City, over an excellent highway which is being steadily improved, is what the earthquakes have left of the second of the country's capitals—Antigua. On no account should you miss it, for no place in all Middle America so well repays a visit. In its day Antigua was the fountainhead of Central American culture, an artistic and literary center second only to the City of Mexico. To it flocked scientists, artists, and men of letters from all parts of the Latin-American world; there was published the first newspaper in the New World; there is buried the great Spanish soldier-historian, Bernal Díaz; there stand in ruins some of the most imposing churches, monasteries, convents, and palaces on the American continent.

The road from Guatemala City to Antigua is a wind-

ing and constantly ascending one, interesting for its magnificent scenery and for the glimpses it affords of the Quiché Indians, an ancient race, one of the three great branches of the Mayan stock,<sup>1</sup> who form the bulk of the population of central and western Guatemala. The men, whose features suggest Mongol origin, are squat and powerfully built; a large percentage of the women are good-looking, and some of the younger ones are very beautiful in a dark, wild fashion. Their chatter, presumably a corruption of the ancient Mayan tongue, sounds like Chinese and little else is heard, for in this part of Guatemala Spanish is almost a foreign language.

Along the road sweating Indians in bright-colored garments, bent under enormous burdens, pass at a dog-trot. They are human pack-horses. For them to carry a two-hundred-pound load over a hundred miles of mountain roads is only a chore, and even a child thinks nothing of trotting the thirty miles from Antigua to Guatemala City with a bundle of cotton goods or a roll of mats. The Indian carries his load on his back in a sort of wicker crate, supported by a band across the forehead. Attached to the bottom of the receptacle is a folding wooden leg, so that when he wishes to sit down it supports the weight of the load. So accustomed are the Quichés to heavy burdens that without one they feel actually uncomfortable and, rather than carry an empty crate, frequently fill it with stones. Their flat Mongolian features, their short, sturdy figures, and their ability to carry enormous loads over great distances reminded me of the Gurkha coolies of Nepál.

The Spaniards, who loved sunshine and fine views, had

a genius for choosing dramatic sites for their cities, and this is exemplified in Antigua, which is built on the floor of a mountain-girt valley dominated by the great blue cones of the Volcán del Fuego and the Volcán de Agua—the volcanoes of Fire and Water. At this altitude the air is brisk and invigorating; it is seldom uncomfortably warm, even at midday; and the nights are frequently bitingly cold. This, as the Spaniards realized, made for increased energy, for, though Antigua is in the tropics, its altitude gives it the climate of the temperate zone.

The glory of Antigua lasted only about two hundred years, for it was founded during the last quarter of the sixteenth century and destroyed two years before the battle of Lexington and no attempt has been made to rebuild it. It was laid out by the famous engineer, Antonelli; its buildings were designed by some of the foremost Spanish architects of the time. The capital of all that region now known as Central America, it had a vice-regal palace as large as and considerably more imposing than that of Philip II in Madrid, eighty churches, two universities, and countless magnificent private residences where the Spanish nobles lived in feudal state. Years before the Pilgrims erected their first log meeting-house on the bleak New England coast the Cathedral of San Francisco in Antigua blazed with golden vessels and jeweled crucifixes, with altars of solid silver and chapels paved with rare marbles, with rich brocades and vestments.

Today the cathedral is in ruins. Its roof has collapsed; its nave is hidden beneath a tangle of tropical vegetation; vines and creepers sprout from its walls; but its carven

columns still rear themselves above the desolation, reminders of a glorious past. Nearly all of the city's four-score churches are badly cracked; the domes of many of them have fallen in; all are abandoned. But the huge palace of the captains-general, with its two tiers of arched porticoes, remains largely intact, and the lower floors of many of the buildings wrecked by the earthquake have been converted into comfortable homes, for the city still has a population of several thousand, mainly Indians.

There is a delightful little hotel in Antigua. It is run by a German—or perhaps he is a Swiss—and is a very modest place, but the food is good, the sunny rooms are hung with gay chintz curtains, and it is immaculately kept. In its patio, decorated with richly colored Guatemalan tiles, filled with the perfume of flowers and the song of birds, a little fountain makes music all the day. One of these days I am going to Antigua again, to explore its ruins at my leisure, to wander through its churches and palaces and gardens, to doze in the warm sunshine and to dicker for bright cottons with the Indian women in the marketplace. Of all the places I saw in Central America, this Guatemalan ghost-town was the most fascinating.

## XVI

### THE ROAD TO ACAPULCO

MEXICO! Land of the Aztecs and the conquistadors; mother of California; hunting-ground of the predatory and the ruthless from Cortés to Villa; hill-towns as picturesque as those of Italy; roofs the color of faded rose-petals; white houses sentineled by slim black cypresses; smoking volcanoes; pyramids and temples hoary with antiquity; fountains splashing in scented patios; chaparral and cactus; parrots and leopards; Christian shrines on pagan altars; creaking oxcarts and ambling mule-trains; silver mines; Indians in bright serapes, and pig-tailed matadors in gold-laced jackets; guitars beneath the stars; vaqueros astride of prancing horses; slim señoritas with come-hither eyes and hard red lips; droves of donkeys amid clouds of yellow dust; priestless churches crowded with kneeling worshipers; forests of oil-derricks; violent and vindictive mural paintings; enchiladas and frijoles; treasure in the hills waiting to be found; patient brown peons; hard-faced politicos with guns bulging their hip-pockets; luxury and misery; wealth and squalor; revolutions just around the corner; and the peso at 3.60 to the dollar.

I present the above blurb, without charge, to any transportation system, tourist agency, or hotel which



cares to use it. And, what's more, it is true, every word of it.

Though its borders march with ours for close on two thousand miles, Mexico has escaped Americanization. It is a foreign country, and I don't mean "foreign" as applied to Quebec and Bermuda—more foreign, perhaps, than any this side of China. You can find villages, only a few miles from the beaten paths of travel, where the mode of life remains almost unchanged since the Conquest. Their inhabitants use the language that Montezuma spoke; to them Spanish is a foreign tongue. They go to Mass in old adobe churches and then return home to worship their hidden ancient gods. Too far south to have a winter, too high up to have a summer, the climate on the great plateau which is the tourist's Mexico is rarely colder than late October in the United States or warmer than early June. And, because of the rate of exchange, it is a gratifyingly inexpensive country for travelers with American funds. Even one of the New Deal's fifty-nine-cent dollars will go twice as far in Mexico as in Europe or the West Indies, perhaps three times as far as in Florida or California. For the moment, at least, the biggest bargains on the tourist map are to be found below the Rio Grande.

The countries of which I have given thumb-nail sketches in the preceding chapters were for the most part new to me, but in writing of Mexico I am on familiar ground. I went there first nearly forty years ago, an adventurous youngster in charge of a shipment of horses. And I have been there many times since—in every state from Sonora to Quintana Roo. I have driven

across the republic from the Gulf to the Pacific, south from the Texas border until the roads run out and the trails begin. I motored with Porfirio Díaz from the capital to the Río Balsas; I interviewed Madero when he was a hunted fugitive with a price on his head; I knew Venustiano Carranza, that stubborn, bewhiskered old man who was Woodrow Wilson's *bête noire*; with Pancho Villa and his *dorados* I rode across the deserts of Chihuahua; I have talked politics with Calles of the sphinx face and agate eyes; I once asked President Rodríguez if it was true that he released a political prisoner whenever he broke 80 at golf. I mention this not in a spirit of boastfulness, but to prove that as regards Mexico I know whereof I write.

Mexico City is more than a great modern metropolis with upwards of a million inhabitants. It is the cradle of North American history. It was founded in the dim and distant past, long, long before the white man came. It is the mother of that Hispanic civilization which spread over more than half of what is now the United States. On the spot where the great cathedral stands today, the ancient rulers made human sacrifices to their unclean gods. From here Cortés ruled an empire. Alvarado, the conqueror of Central America, lived in a palace that is now an American restaurant. Its streets have known the tread of Aztec warriors and Spanish men-at-arms; they have shaken to the tramp of American infantry in blue jackets and leather shakos, of French Zouaves in scarlet pantaloons. Mexico City is, in short, a stage on which has been enacted one of the most thrilling dramas in history.

Yet, despite the Mexican capital's antiquity, it has a singularly unfinished appearance. Throughout the city demolition or construction is always going on, which may be a sign of progress. It has any number of fine old buildings dating from Spanish times, and a few imposing modern ones, but its general appearance is marred by excavations, scaffoldings, hoardings, heaps of débris, piles of building material, shacks, temporary structures of every description. The National Theater, the most magnificent building of its kind in the world, though begun during the administration of Porfirio Díaz, was not completed until 1933. The enormous arch which dominates the entire city—originally intended as a palace for the Chamber of Deputies but later transformed into a monument to commemorate "the Revolution of Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow"—is still unfinished, though it has been in course of construction for more than thirty years.

It is a city of immense distances and fine vistas, of magnificent boulevards and numerous open spaces, its general lay-out and its flatness being reminiscent of Paris. The vast Plaza de la Constitución, commonly known as the Zócalo, corresponds to the Place de la Concorde; the broad and imposing Paseo de la Reforma, bordered by promenades shaded by fine trees, to the Champs-Élysées; the narrow Avenida Francisco Madero, which is the fashionable shopping thoroughfare, to the Rue de la Paix; the gardens beyond the National Theater to the Jardin des Tuileries; the Park of Chapultepec to the Bois de Boulogne.

Mexico City's greatest need is modern hotels, though

I believe that several are now in course of construction. Currently, however, it has only one which could be considered anywhere near first-class according to American standards. It is under American management and is not cheap, but it is well run and warm, the latter an important thing on a plateau 7,400 feet above sea level. At the downtown hotels, such as the Ritz, the Regis, and the Imperial, you can get a double room and bath for from ten to twelve pesos, or about three dollars. For breakfast and lunch most visitors go to Sanborn's, which is in the magnificent palace given by Cortés to his lieutenant, Pedro de Alvarado. It is like eating in a museum, for the walls are sheathed in sixteenth century Spanish tiles, carved stone columns support a lofty glass roof, and the place is filled with antique furniture, paintings, and hangings. There are any number of other restaurants, Mexican, American, French, German, and Italian, the most recherché and expensive being Paolo's, a small, unobtrusive establishment with a cuisine reminiscent of the lamented Voisin's in Paris. Curiously enough, Mexico City has no night life, unless by night life is meant cinema houses and beer-halls. Until quite recently the fashionable world congregated at the Foreign Club to dine, dance, and gamble, but it was closed by President Cárdenas, along with the casinos at Cuernavaca and Aguascalientes as a gesture of reform. I might remark, *en passant*, that in Mexico City evening dress is never worn in public places, even at the opera, and that you need not bother to take your evening clothes along unless you expect to dine at a private home or at one of the embassies or legations.

In my foreword I remarked that by some this volume would probably be criticized as guidebookish. But, if you are going to Mexico City, there are several things which you ought to see; so, whether it smacks of Herr Baedeker's methods or not, I shall briefly enumerate them.

1. The National Palace.—This enormous building, occupying one entire side of the Zócalo, is the seat of the Mexican Government. Here the President has his offices. Enter through the main gateway—the numerous sentries will offer no objections—turn to the left in the courtyard and ascend the stairs. Covering the entire wall of the stairway, from bottom to top, is Diego Rivera's painted hymn of hate. This panorama of Mexican history begins with a conquistador raping an Indian woman and ends with Porfirio Díaz and his *científicos* grouped before a background of gallows and oil-derricks. Though original in execution and glorious in color, the historical value of the mural is ruined by the painter's savage vindictiveness.

2. The National Museum.—At the back of the National Palace. A remarkable collection very badly arranged, which you could spend days inspecting. If you are pressed for time, ask to see the Aztec Calendar Stone and the Monte Alban Treasure. The latter contains some of the most exquisite examples of ancient jewelry in existence, notably the breastplate of the Jaguar Knight.

3. The Cathedral.—Built in the form of a cross on the site of the Great Temple of the Aztecs, it is a quarter again as large as Notre Dame in Paris. Though, under the anti-religious laws, only one priest is permitted to

this huge sanctuary, it is always crowded with the pious of all classes. When you see the rapt expressions on the faces of the kneeling worshipers you will understand how strong is the opposition which confronts the government in its struggle with the church.

4. The National Theater.—An imposing pile of sculptured marble which it took a third of a century to complete. Its seats are so comfortable that sitting through a performance of Wagnerian opera is not a hardship. The outstanding feature of the building is the wonderful glass curtain by Louis Tiffany. It depicts the volcanoes of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, dawn and sunset on the great peaks being simulated by an ingenious lighting arrangement. And try to get a look at the stars' dressing-rooms; they are more sumptuous than any in Hollywood.

5. The Park of Chapultepec.—Hundreds of acres of lawns and lakes and gardens and forest. Some of its magnificent trees antedate the Conquest, and beneath one of them, estimated to be at least a thousand years old, Montezuma is said to have sat on "the Night of Tears." The best time to visit the park is on a Sunday morning, when the bridle paths are filled with riders in *charro* costumes—picturesque reminders of the Mexico that was.

6. The Castle of Chapultepec—The White House of Mexico, the official residence of its presidents, built on the lofty rock which was the site of Montezuma's summer palace. It is not impressive, either inside or out, looking more like a Riviera hotel than a palace. Gallantly defended by adolescent Mexican cadets, its precipitous

slopes were carried by storm in 1847 by the American troops under General Scott.

7. Guadalupe-Hidalgo. — An uninteresting basilica perched on a hillside above a squalid suburb of the capital. But, as the shrine of the Virgin of Guadalupe, the country's patron saint, it is the Mecca of all pious Mexicans. In mid-December, when the fiesta of the Virgin is celebrated, pilgrims flock there by the hundreds of thousands from all parts of the republic. So enormous is the crowd that it is almost impossible to get within sight of the church, much less to enter it, but the occasion provides the visitor with an unparalleled opportunity to see a cross-section of Mexico's diversified population. Be prepared for fleas, body odors, and to have your pocket picked.

8. The Floating Gardens of Xochimilco. — Three-quarters of an hour from the capital. An amazing labyrinth of canals and lagoons bordered by gardens planted with an infinite variety of fruits and flowers, which are shipped from here by boat to the Mexico City markets. In Aztec time the flowers were grown on rafts, sometimes a hundred feet long, covered with earth, but with the centuries the rafts were abandoned and became stationary under the weight of earth, so that they now form an archipelago of little islands covered with trees and flowers. Drive out to Xochimilco in the late afternoon, hire a gondola, which resembles the punts used on the Thames save that it has a canopy, and remain into the evening. Drifting along the narrow waterways are flower-festooned, illuminated barges bearing bands of native musicians; for a dime you can buy more roses

or violets than you can carry; the air is filled with music and soft Latin voices and the scent of blossoms. You think Venice is the most romantic spot on earth? Well, wait until you have seen the Floating Gardens of Xochimilco by moonlight.

9. Teotihuacán, "Place of the Gods," the Thebes of the New World, the site of the most important archaeological discoveries in Mexico, outside of Yucatan.—About an hour by car from the capital. Here, rising from the dusty plain, are the Pyramid of the Sun, the Pyramid of the Moon, the Temple of Quetzalcoatl the sun-god, the Highway of the Dead, and a vast system of courts, terraces, tombs, and ceremonial places. The majority are of Toltec origin, built long before the Aztecs entered the Valley of Mexico, but certain of them are believed to be far older, probably antedating the Christian era. If you have seen the Pyramids at Gizeh you will probably be disappointed in those of Teotihuacán. Not, however, because of their proportions, for the Pyramid of the Sun, though truncated, is a tremendous structure, more than two-thirds the height of the Great Pyramid of Egypt; but, rather, because the topography of the surrounding country makes it impossible to view them in perspective. If the authorities would level the hillocks, sand dunes, and accumulations of débris at the base of the Pyramid of the Sun, so that it rose, as it probably did originally, from a vast plaza, the visitor would get the thrill of a lifetime.

If you do not mind dust, sun, and heat, you can spend a most instructive day at Teotihuacán. But the best time to view the ruins is at twilight, when the sun is sinking



behind the Sierra Madre and the snow-crowned peaks of Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, away to the southward, are encarmined by the alpenglow. At La Gruata, a few hundred yards from the pyramids, you can get a tolerably good dinner in one of the most singular restaurants in the world, the tables being ranged on the floor of an enormous cave. After dinner, stroll out and take another look at the pyramids. Seen by the light of the stars they will give you a tremendous kick, whether you give a hang for archaeology or not.

Though there are numerous other things of great interest to be seen in Mexico City and its immediate vicinity, I have enumerated the high spots. After you have seen them you might, by way of contrast, take in a bullfight. Because the goring of helpless horses revolts me I don't go to *corridas* myself; but it is all a matter of taste.

It might interest you to know that it is now entirely feasible to motor from the United States to Mexico City, or, for that matter, to Acapulco on the Pacific. This is made possible by the Mexican section of the Pan-American Highway, which starts at Nuevo Laredo on the Rio Grande and will eventually be pushed south to Panama. The day is not far distant when it will be possible to drive in perfect safety and comfort, over splendid roads, from Fairbanks, Alaska, to the Canal. The total length of the highway will be 8,500 miles, of which four-fifths is now open to traffic.

When I motored to Mexico in December, 1934, all of the highway between the Rio Grande and the capital had been completed save the sixty-five miles between

Tamazunchale and Jacala. This short section, which it took me eighteen hours to traverse, is called with great appropriateness "the Neck of Death." When, by special permission of the government, I crawled over it, there were many stretches where it was literally impossible to get out of the car, for, so narrow was the shelf which had been blasted from the rock that my inner wheels scraped the face of the cliff and my outer ones all but overhung a thousand feet of emptiness. But the Mexican government has had thousands of men at work, and the Neck of Death will probably be no more than a memory by the time this book is published.

This remarkable highway, as well built as the best in the United States, is far more than a convenience for tourists; it is a tremendous civilizing influence, for it opens up regions which the railways have left untouched and where, until very recently, the only means of transportation were horses, mules, and oxcarts. A few miles south of Monterrey you enter unchanged Mexico. This is the Mexico that you read about as a child, that was pictured in your school-books. On it, barring the highway itself, civilization has made almost no impress. The Indians who dwell within half a mile of the road live essentially as they did when the conquistadors came. Incidentally, it is the only trunk road in the world to link the temperate and tropic zones, for at kilometer-stone 688, twelve miles beyond Ciudad Victoria, it crosses the Tropic of Cancer.

From the hamlet of Villa Juarez—you can find it only on a large-scale map—a road of sorts winds for ninety miles through the virgin jungle to Tampico on the Gulf

of Mexico. It is really no more than a trail and is rarely used by motorists—I met no cars and not more than half a dozen human beings in the entire distance—but, though hemmed in by impenetrable bush and almost hidden by two-foot grass, it is quite passable provided there have been no recent rains. If you have brought along a gun you might keep it loaded and handy, for you will almost certainly see wild turkey, deer, and perhaps a jaguar. But don't walk about in the jungle if you wish to avoid ticks, which are among the most irritating of tropical insects, for they burrow under the skin and form festering sores.

Tampico is a ghost-town, dwelling in the memories of its hectic past. It was, until a few years ago, the center of one of the richest oil-fields in the world, crowded with speculators, operators, engineers, drillers, gamblers, adventurers, women of easy virtue, drawn thither by the lure of the "black gold." But the salt water came in and flooded the wells, and Tampico's boom abruptly collapsed. Today it is dirty, dilapidated, dispirited, and discouraged. Only a few wells remain in operation, and the population has been reduced by more than half. Of the ten thousand Americans who were attracted there by the oil boom most have drifted elsewhere.

Today the only conceivable reason for visiting Tampico is the tarpon fishing, which is the best in the world—also the easiest and the most inexpensive. A boat costs ten dollars a day, and instead of being tossed about on the open sea you troll in the smooth waters of the Panuco, almost within sight of the city's wharves. The big fish begin to enter the river in December and remain

until the end of May. It would be extraordinary if in a day's fishing you did not have at least a dozen strikes. How many tarpon you land depends upon your skill in playing the fightingest of all big-game fish.

If you can possibly spare the time you should not fail to visit Puebla, sixty-odd miles southeast of Mexico City. The highway is one of the most scenic in the world, finer than the Corniche on the Riviera and fully equal to any in the Alps. The road skirts the base of Ixtaccihuatl, 17,323 feet, and of Popocatepetl, which is five hundred feet higher, while in the eastern distance Orizaba, mightiest of all Mexican volcanoes, lifts its snowy crest 18,300 feet into the blue.

In Spanish times Puebla was, as it is today, a city of wealth and importance. You see it from afar, its majolica domes gleaming amid the foliage like tinted Easter eggs in a green nest. Here the great nobles and rich planters lived in feudal luxury, the countless churches and palaces which they built exemplifying both the glories and the horrors of the Spanish Renaissance. In the church of Santo Domingo is the famous chapel of El Rosario, every square foot of its walls and ceiling covered with gilded and polychromed stucco carved in high relief. You are expected to exclaim that it looks like a jewel casket. The Casa de Alfeñique, once the guest-house of the viceroys, now the State Museum, with its rose lava and majolica walls and whipped cream finish, looks like an enormous wedding cake. The best thing in it is a Toltec image of a dog baying at the moon—a masterpiece in jadeite.

Cuernavaca, half a hundred miles due south of Mexico

City, is to the Mexican capital what Versailles is to Paris and Potsdam to Berlin. Since the earliest days it has been the country seat of viceroys, emperors, presidents, and dictators, a resort of the politically powerful and the rich. The highway, which is fully as scenic as as that to Puebla, at one point attains an altitude of more than ten thousand feet, almost every turn disclosing entrancing views of "Popo" and the Sleeping Woman.

From the Valley of Mexico the road climbs by easy gradients to highlands fragrant with pines and then drops down into an enchanted vale of tropical trees and flowers. This is the most traveled road in the republic and, because it winds through narrow defiles and gloomy gorges, offers a standing temptation to bandits. For the protection of travelers the government has erected at intervals of a few miles stone blockhouses garrisoned by federal troops, but, despite this precaution, there are occasional hold-ups. The highwaymen, however, are not picturesque riders from the hills astride of wiry cayuses, but criminals from Mexico City's underworld who make their raids in high-powered cars and otherwise imitate the methods of American gangsters. There is a certain romantic compensation in being waylaid by brigands in high-crowned hats, with rifles across their saddle-bows, but there is no romance in being held up by a bunch of crooks armed with tommy-guns. You can have that experience at home.

Cuernavaca is on the Pacific side of the Sierra, more than three thousand feet below the level of the Mexican plateau. It may be midwinter in Mexico City, rainy and raw, but at Cuernavaca, only fifty miles away, the sun

is shining and the roses are in bloom. Sprinkling the slopes of the hills, tucked away in the wooded cañons, are hundreds of white villas set in gardens which blaze with color the whole year round.

In the town is the palace built by Cortés and the great cathedral, begun in 1529, where the Conqueror worshiped. In a loggia of the palace are the murals painted by Diego Rivera to the order of the late Ambassador Morrow, who presented them to the nation. They are generally considered the best of the artist's works, and are certainly the most carefully executed, but they reveal the same ferocious hatred of foreigners and of the Church which characterizes Rivera's murals in the National Palace. One questions, moreover, the appropriateness of painting on the walls of a government building pictures glorifying the brigand-patriot Zapata, who showed his patriotism by devastating the richest state in Mexico.

A few hundred yards beyond the cathedral, set well back from the highway behind a high wire fence covered with magenta and scarlet bougainvillea (an atrocious combination!), is a large white villa with sentries at the gate. This is the country home, or, rather, one of the numerous country homes, of the ex-schoolmaster and ex-president, General Plutarco Elías Calles, son of a Syrian father and an Indian mother, who has been undisputed master of Mexico for more than a decade. You will hear it said that the dictator's power is on the wane, that the Mexicans are tiring of "Callismo." This may be the case, for Calles is in poor health, but the steady stream of political leaders, financiers, soldiers, and busi-

ness men who make pilgrimages to Cuernavaca to consult him and to beg his support suggests that the taciturn, iron-faced man is still a power to be reckoned with.

There are numerous hotels in Cuernavaca, most of them comfortable and one up to date, but the historic one in the Borda Gardens is the place to stay if you are willing to sacrifice modern conveniences for romance. The Borda Gardens were built by an adventurous Frenchman, Joseph le Borde, who came to Mexico early in the eighteenth century, when barely out of his teens, made a fabulous fortune in the mines of Taxco, and became Mexico's silver king. The gardens, which cover several acres, are filled with rare trees and plants; there are innumerable fountains and balustraded terraces and moss-grown stairways and miradors and leafy promenades. But their chief feature is an enormous swimming pool, nearly five hundred feet long, dotted with little islands covered with tropical vegetation and bordered by crumbling stone seats like those in a Roman amphitheater. Nowhere this side of the Shalimar, in the Punjab, do I know of a more idyllic spot.

In these enchanted gardens walk two ghosts: a tall, blond-whiskered man in a tight white uniform and a beautiful, slender woman whose crinoline skirt sweeps the weed-grown paths. For in the days of the Empire that tragic imperial couple, Maximilian and Carlotta, lived in the Borda mansion for many months. In the hotel parlor is the Empress' grand piano, made in Vienna, a beautiful instrument of mahogany and ormolu; and for ten pesos a day, including meals, you may occupy

the Emperor's suite, with the Habsburg arms over the bed.

There is a legend in Cuernavaca that during his stay there the Emperor had a love affair with a gardener's pretty daughter. It may be true, for, like all the Habsburgs, Maximilian could not resist a pretty face. In any event, while strolling about the town you will probably see a tall old man with blue eyes, long white side-whiskers and the characteristic Habsburg nose and lower lip. He claims to have been born in 1867, which was the year that Maximilian was executed on the slopes of Querétaro, and is very proud of what he asserts is a family resemblance.

Fifty-odd miles beyond Cuernavaca, by an abominably dusty road with countless hairpin and hair-raising turns, is the little mountain town of Taxco—pronounced "Tasco." It is a Barbizon or a Provincetown in a mountain setting, much frequented by artists, for it is an amazingly pictorial place, every turn disclosing a quaint scene, an enchanting vista. During the winter months painters flock to Taxco in such numbers that it is next to impossible to obtain accommodation between Christmas and Easter.

Narrow, flint-paved streets meander up hill and down; clinging precariously to the steep slopes are red-roofed white and pink and blue and yellow houses; over the high walls bordering the lanes pour torrents of crimson bougainvillea; an ancient baroque cathedral, its façade dripping with carvings, overlooks a laurel-shaded plaza where Indians in bright garments sell fruits and flowers; down a narrow side street is the pink villa in which lived



Alexander Humboldt; rising like the keep of a medieval castle above the wine-shops and hovels of the lower town is the enormous stone palace built two centuries ago by Joseph le Borde, the silver king. Thanks to the Ministry of Fine Arts, Taxco will not be ruined by modernization, for it has been made a national monument and its original aspect will be jealously preserved.

So far as most tourists are concerned, Taxco is the end of the trail; but the road—very dusty and in places very rough—continues another two hundred miles to Acapulco, on the Pacific. If you don't wish to go to the expense of hiring a car, you can make the trip without serious discomfort by bus. It is well worth taking if you wish to see a part of Mexico which remains almost unaffected by foreign influences.

The smoking strip of ankle-deep yellow dust which is the highway leads straight across the state of Guerrero, crossing four distinct mountain ranges, each intervening valley more tropical in appearance than the preceding one, before it slakes its thirst in the Pacific. From Taxco the road drops sharply to the hot lands around Iguala. The character of the vegetation undergoes a rapid change. Pines give place to palms; chaparral and cactus to limes, lemons, papayas, tamarinds, guavas, mangoes, and bananas. I took a picnic lunch along and ate it on the banks of the Río Balsas, but you can get a fairly good meal in the garden of a clean little hotel at Chilpancingo de los Bravos, a hot, sleepy, earthquake-ridden town which had undergone no appreciable change since I was there a quarter of a century before with Porfirio Díaz.

The country becomes even more tropical beyond the Balsas. Huddled beside the road are clusters of bamboo huts thatched with palm-fronds—some with the high conical roofs of Central Africa—their dusty dooryards enclosed by living fences of organ cactus. The highway climbs another range and zigzags down into another valley. Now the jungle rises on either hand in a solid wall of green. A snake slithers across the road, its course marked by a moving swirl of yellow dust. A swarm of small green parrots rocket from the bush like a covey of partridges. Monkeys chatter in the treetops. At long last, when you have decided that the mountains will never end, you top a final range—and before you, blue as a Persian tile, spreads the Pacific. Below, set on the edge of an island-studded harbor, Acapulco, port of romance, peers out from amid its palms.

Acapulco's golden age began in 1531, when Cortés sent two ships from there to explore the western seaboard of the continent, and lasted for upward of three centuries. During this period its name was on the lips of every mariner, it rang in the ears of the adventurous, for it was the western terminus for the treasure argosies which carried Mexican silver to the Orient and came back laden with the silks and spices and ivories of the Far Eastern lands.

But its glory has long since departed. Today, save for coasting vessels and an occasional Grace or Pacific Line steamer, its splendid harbor is used only by fishing craft. Cut off from the outside world by miles of mountains, jungle, and desert on the one hand, by leagues of ocean on the other, it dozes in squalor beneath the tropic sun.

Down the center of its cobbled, filth-strewn streets run open sewers from which assorted stenchcs rise to heaven. The law is laxly enforced, and its inhabitants are prone to settle their disputes with knife or gun. The nearest railroad is nearly a hundred miles away; it has no banks, no telephone.

But it has two superlative attractions—its surf-bathing and its deep-sea fishing. Even in the South Seas you will find no finer beaches—miles and miles of palm-fringed silver sand on which the great rollers from the Pacific break with the crash of cannon. But beware of sunburn! Do you care for big-game fishing? Really big fish, I mean; not comparative minnows such as tuna and tarpon. Then Acapulco is the place to come, for the chances are better than even that during the first day you will land a giant ray, a sea monster which is sometimes twenty feet long and weighs four thousand pounds. You will never forget the experience, for the ray, when harpooned, instead of leaping in a silver arc like a tarpon, rises flat from the water, sometimes to a height of twenty feet, like a gyroplane. If, as occasionally happens, he comes down upon a boat, that boat is *spurlos versenkt*. But in those waters swim creatures far larger than the *mantaraya*. While I was in Acapulco a whale entered the little cove below the hotel and for a quarter of an hour dove and rolled and spouted in a nautical circus.

Acapulco has a number of hotels, but those in the town I cannot recommend. Some of the larger sleeping-rooms contain as many as six double beds and I have my doubts about the drinking water. But at the northern edge of

the town, atop a lofty cliff which rises perpendicularly from the sea, Don Carlos Barnard, an enterprising Mexican with an English grandfather and an American education, has built a group of bungalows which he calls El Mirador. If you have in your soul any love of beauty and romance, you cannot fail to like it. You dine on a terrace between land and sky and look out across the star-lit Pacific toward China. On a clear night you can almost make out the lights along the Bund in Shanghai. From the darkened beach far below rise the tinkle of guitars and the caressing cadences of a Spanish love song. An orange moon rises out of the jungle. The gentle night breeze brings to you the strange, alluring scents of the hot lands.

. . . Xochimilco, Cuernavaca, Acapulco . . . Magic names and magic places! White milestones on the road of memory! Some day I am going back to them.

## XVII

### TEMPLES IN THE JUNGLE

THE Mexico City-Mérida planes take off at break of dawn, so that when I left my hotel for the airport it was still dark and the capital was sleeping. The steel shutters of the shops were down and the streets were deserted save for occasional policemen, wrapped in their great-coats, for at that hour on the Mexican plateau the cold is penetrating. But the suburbs were already astir. Lights gleamed in the windows of the low adobe houses; the broad arteries leading in from the *tierra* were crowded with peasants and hooded carts and droves of diminutive donkeys, produce-laden, market-bound. The long column of ghostly figures bent beneath heavy burdens, the shuffle of feet, creak of wheels, clatter of hoofs, reminded me of those early mornings in war-time France when the roads were filled with troops moving up to the front.

The air-field was swept by a raw wind from the High Sierra and, in spite of a large cup of black coffee liberally dosed with cognac, I shivered beneath my fleeced-lined warm. We took off just as dawn was breaking—a fine silver wire stretched tautly along the eastern horizon. As we gained altitude it widened rapidly into a silver-and-rose ribbon. Then, abruptly, as though some

one had switched on the electric lights in a dark room, came the sun.

We climbed steadily in order to surmount the great ranges which hem the Mexican tableland. Off to the south loomed Popocatepetl and Ixtaccihuatl, their lower slopes enshrouded by mist but their snow-clad peaks glistening as though strewn with diamonds. As their summits appeared to be about on a level with the plane I judged that we were flying at not less than eighteen thousand feet—perhaps twenty thousand. The air was thin and I had some difficulty in breathing.

I caught a distant glimpse of Puebla, the tiled domes of its countless churches gleaming like enormous gems in the sunshine. Far below a highway angled across the countryside—a thin line drawn on a sheet of brown wrapping-paper with white crayon. The Road of the Conquerors! Up it, for the conquest of Mexico, had trudged Cortés and his steel-clad men-at-arms, the French armies of Bazaine, Scott and his Americans. The white cone of Orizaba—a mile higher than Fujiyama and vastly more imposing—rose grandly from the plain. Now we were losing altitude rapidly, as indicated by the pressure against my eardrums. Then the hot blue of the Gulf and the white buildings of Vera Cruz baking in the sun.

A brief pause at the Tejería airport and we were off again. The next port of call was Minatitlan, a few miles inland from Coatzacoalcos, or Puerto Mexico, to give it its new name. Minatitlan is the center of one of the richest petroleum fields in the republic and the airport was thronged with American and English oil men. Near

the landing-field was a club house, built by one of the oil companies for the use of its officials, its low roof and verandas suggestive of an Indian dak-bungalow. Just beyond was—of all things!—a golf course, laid out in a jungle clearing but with beautifully kept fairways and greens.

We lunched at Villa Hermosa, the capital of the state of Tabasco, which has given its name to the condiment made from the red peppers grown in that region. Though enormously rich in natural products, Tabasco remains largely undeveloped, for the state is covered with dense forests, impenetrable jungles, malarial swamps, and a network of little streams. Low and flat, its climate is unhealthy and enervating.

Villa Hermosa is rather proud of its reputation of being the toughest town in Mexico; every male inhabitant packs a gun, and there are frequent sudden deaths from lead poisoning. And it is a hotbed of communism. The most conspicuous—and perhaps most significant—feature of President Cárdenas' inaugural parade was the large Tabasco delegation, which marched through the streets of Mexico City wearing red shirts, carrying red flags, and chanting communist songs.

Drawn up at one end of the Villa Hermosa flying-field were three or four antiquated pursuit planes, painted purple and green. I was told that they were the property of the state, and that when the inhabitants of the rural districts refuse to support the communist ticket, or otherwise prove recalcitrant, the governor orders his air-squadron to drop a few bombs on their towns by way of warning.

It is a two-hour flight from Villa Hermosa to Campeche, and, because of the heat waves rising from the jungle it is very bumpy flying. The principal product of this region is logwood, or *palo de campeche*, from which dyes are made and from which both the state and its capital derive their name. The scenery is typical of the Mexican *tierra caliente*—vast areas of dense forest and rank jungle, interspersed with stretches of sand on which nothing can be grown; occasional villages of bamboo and thatch set in little clearings; a maze of narrow streams navigated by dugouts paddled by Indians; crocodiles basking on the sand-bars, pink flamingos and snowy herons feeding on the shores of the lagoons, huge black vultures flapping overhead in quest of carrion.

Half an hour after leaving Campeche the plane crosses into Yucatan. A few miles beyond the border, rising above the scrubby vegetation, are the ruined palaces and temples of Uxmal, once one of the great centers of Mayan civilization. They are less than forty miles from Mérida, and, if you have not had enough of Mayan remains after visiting Chichen-Itzá, you can run out to Uxmal by narrow-gauge train.

Though Yucatan is one of the twenty-eight United States of Mexico, it is a foreign country so far as the other twenty-seven are concerned. Indeed, the peninsula (which includes the states of Yucatan and Campeche and the territory of Quintana Roo) might as well be an island, for it is isolated from the rest of the republic by hundreds of miles of forest, desert, jungle, and swamp. Though Yucatan has a railway system of



its own, it can be reached from the outside world neither by road nor by rail; only by boat or plane.

The Mayans who comprise its native population are of a different stock from the natives of Mexico proper, have a different history and traditions, speak a different tongue. The Spanish element, proud of its Hispanic descent and culture, regards the *mestizos* who constitute the ruling class in Mexico with unconcealed contempt and disdain. So strong is the sense of nationalism among the people of Yucatan, so avid are they for independence, that during the last ninety years they have seceded three times, and three times have been subjugated by force of arms. Though Mérida, the capital, is a stronghold of communism, the vast majority of the people of Yucatan, both Spaniards and Mayans, strongly disapprove of the communistic and anti-religious policies of the central government, detest the officials who are sent from Mexico City to govern them, and lose no opportunity to remind the visitor that they are not Mexicans but Yucatecans.

I was met at the Mérida airport by a courtly but garrulous old gentleman who introduced himself as Don Rafael Rajil. I assumed that some one had asked him to meet me, for he took charge of my luggage, bundled me into a ramshackle car, and kept up an unbroken flow of conversation until we stopped before a fine old building which, I judged, dated from early colonial times. Not until he handed me a pen and asked me to write my name in the register did I awake to the fact that he was the owner and manager of the Hotel Itzá, which, until it was turned into a hostelry, had been the

residence of the Rajil family for generations. I should advise you to stay there, for it is comfortable and clean, the windows of its enormous rooms overlook a charming garden, and Don Rafael is a mine of information.

When we arrived a small crowd was gathered outside the hotel.

"What's going on?" I asked Don Rafael. "Anything happened?"

"Nothing of importance," he assured me after a word with the clerk. "It seems that while one of our local political leaders was having a drink at the bar one of his enemies walked in and shot him. It's unfortunate, but such things will happen."

Though he didn't say so, I judged from his tone that he was not sorry that it had happened. I got the impression that he had not cared for the deceased.

The Yucatecan capital, which has a population of more than one hundred thousand, sprawls on a plain as flat and yellow as the top of a pine table, for in the dry season it is almost destitute of vegetation. The most remarkable feature of the city is its windmills, of which there are said to be thirteen thousand. Virtually every house has its own well and windmill, for there is no municipal water system.

Mérida was founded in 1542, on the site of a former native city, by Count de Montejo, and the *casa* which he built, known as "the House of the Conqueror," is still occupied by his descendants. It is unique in that it has six patios, each with a tiled pool and fountain. This must have been very convenient for a large family,

particularly in a land where the people spend most of their time out of doors, for the father could entertain his cronies in one patio, the mother could have a tea party in a second patio, the grandmother could take her siesta undisturbed in a third patio, and so on. Most of the older houses have their private chapels, though they are rarely used nowadays because of the shortage of clergymen. Mérida is one of the most religious cities in Mexico, but the government allows only four priests to minister to the spiritual needs of its one hundred thousand inhabitants.

The city has an imposing sixteenth century cathedral, though during the revolution its interior was wrecked by vandals and its superb carvings burned. Also an enormous and ornately decorated opera house with four balconies, including a "horseshoe circle" of boxes, and a seating capacity of four thousand. Before the collapse of the sisal market, when the Yucatecan hemp-planters had more money than they knew what to do with, and when opera companies and *corps de ballet* were brought over from France or Spain, it is said that the display of gowns and jewels in the Mérida opera house on a gala night equaled that at the Metropolitan in New York.

Unlike most Spanish cities, Mérida is regularly laid out, with straight, fairly wide streets and a great number of plazas and parks. In the old quarter, at every street intersection, there is a huge figure in stucco or stone, usually set above the street on the roof of a corner building. These curious figures represent many things—angels, saints, soldiers, animals, mythological

monsters—and were originally set up in lieu of street-names. This simplified life in early times, for a Spaniard who wished to communicate with a friend had only to say to his native servant: "Take this note to Don Pedro López and wait for an answer. He lives in the Street of the Warrior, two doors from the Street of the Elephant. If he isn't there you will probably find him in the patio of the house at the corner of the Street of the Angel Gabriel and the Street of the Tiger."

Mérida is without exception the cleanest city I have ever seen, though I don't know whether its extraordinary cleanliness is due to the municipal administration, or to the householders, or to both. The asphalted streets are scrubbed as Dutch housewives scrub their front doorsteps and I always felt that I should wipe off my shoes before walking on them. When I mentioned this to an American woman who lives in Mérida she said: "Oh, but you should have seen them before the revolution. Then they were *really* clean. In those days I could have sat down on any street in the city in a white satin gown without getting a speck of dirt on it."

Mérida is a city of fine homes, and one of the finest, an imposing white mansion surrounded by beautiful gardens, was built with the proceeds of a lottery ticket. The story was told me by Don Rafael Rajil, and, as it concerns his cousin, I have no reason to doubt it.

This cousin, whom we will call Don Arturo, was urged by a friend to buy a ticket which the latter held in the Madrid Lottery. The price asked was eight hundred pesos. As Don Arturo didn't have that amount of cash to spare, he offered to pay for the ticket in char-

coal. To this the friend agreed, for he used large quantities of charcoal in his business. Shortly thereafter Don Arturo was called to Mexico City. Before leaving, in a moment of temporary aberration, he entrusted the ticket for safekeeping to the pretty Mérida girl who was his mistress, promising that if he won he would treat her generously. The day after his arrival in the capital he received a wire notifying him that he had won the grand prize of ten million pesetas, then equivalent to about two million dollars. Delirious with joy, Don Arturo hastened back to Mérida to cash in on his ticket, but the girl refused to surrender it until he had made a satisfactory settlement. Her lover assured her that he intended to treat her generously, but she told him that she wanted cash instead of promises. They finally compromised on \$125,000. With it the girl built herself a mansion which made Mérida's eyes pop out. When you go there any one will point it out.

The broad plain on which Mérida is built consists of a thin layer of soil over a limestone foundation. The limestone being porous, the rainfall percolates rapidly, so that nothing can be grown unless artificially irrigated. In order to plant trees it is necessary to blast holes in the rock with dynamite and then fill the holes with earth. Yet, in spite of these drawbacks, the *fincas* in the vicinity of Mérida produce fruits which are noted for their size and flavor—oranges, lemons, limes, grapefruit, mangoes, papayas, bananas, avocados, the last the size of coconuts.

But the principal source of Yucatan's wealth is its enormous hennequén plantations, some of which cover

hundreds of thousands of acres, employ small armies of peons, and have their own narrow-gauge railway systems. Hennequén, or sisal, is a form of agave, a close relation to the so-called "century plant," and the hemp made from its fiber is second in strength only to Manila hemp, which is made from a species of banana peculiar to the Philippines. Every one in Yucatan is interested, directly or indirectly, in sisal, which is as staple a subject of conversation as coffee in Brazil or wheat in Kansas.

It is a safe guess that ninety-nine out of every one hundred visitors to Yucatan are headed for Chichen-Itzá, the ruined Mayan capital which is engulfed in the jungle eighty-five miles southeast of Mérida on the borders of Quintana Roo. The train which leaves Mérida at 5:30 A.M. will bear you over a narrow-gauge railway as far as Dzitsas, where, if you have telegraphed ahead, a car may—or may not—be waiting to transport you over a dozen miles of execrable road to the ruins.

While the toy train is jogging along at twelve miles an hour, there being nothing to see along the way save miles and miles of sisal plantations, suppose I tell you something about Chichen-Itzá; for in order to appreciate the significance of what you will see there you must know something of its historical background.

To begin with, then, the location of the city was determined by two large *cenotes*, or wells, and from these it derived its curious name: *Chi*, which in Mayan means "mouth," *chen*, which means "wells," and *Itzá*, the name of the particular tribe which settled there, so that Chi-

chen-Itzá may be translated as Mouths of the Wells of the Itzá.

Virtually all of the Mayan literature was burned by the early Spanish priests, all that survived this vandalism being the codices in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris and in the Madrid and Dresden museums. These the philologists have made little progress in translating. But, though the language of the early Mayas remains a closed book, dates and figures have been deciphered, so that at least the high points of Mayan history are known.

The building of Chichen-Itzá probably began early in the sixth century of the Christian era, before Mohammed was born, when the greater part of Europe was still covered by "the mantle of the dark." In the beginning it was no more than an outpost of Mayan civilization, for at that time the "Old Empire" was flourishing in much larger centers farther south. When the Old Empire collapsed and the Mayan cities in Guatemala and beyond were abandoned, Chichen-Itzá became the politico-religious capital of a new Mayan empire, occupying a position roughly analogous to that of Rome under the popes. It reached the zenith of its power and culture about 1000 A.D., when the city is believed to have had a population of not less than one hundred thousand, including a vast number of priests and officials connected with the temples. The next two centuries constituted the golden age of Mayan art, science, and religion, with majestic temples and imposing monuments scattered about the land.

Seeking to still further strengthen themselves, the Mayan tribes banded themselves together in a confedera-

tion known as the League of Mayapan. But the League collapsed in 1201, when the Itzáns were attacked by their allies under the leadership of the Emperor Chac Xib Chac—"the Very Red Man." But the Itzáns, with the aid of Toltec and Aztec mercenaries brought from central Mexico, succeeded in smashing the forces of Chac Xib Chac and making themselves masters of the confederation. The Itzáns paid a high price for their supremacy, however, for the warriors from the north brought with them and imposed upon the Mayans the worship of their own chief deity, Quetzalcoatl, "the Fair God," who was eventually adopted into the Mayan religion under the name of Kukulcan.

During the next three centuries Chichen-Itzá attained heights of prosperity, prominence, culture, and architectural splendor theretofore unknown; great temples, shrines, monasteries, and palaces rose as by magic from the Yucatecan plain. But after an existence of approximately a thousand years the city was suddenly abandoned about a century before the Spaniards came. The cause of its sudden abandonment has long been a matter for speculation, the theory held by the American archaeologists working on its site being that it was due to impoverishment and paralysis brought on by a great economic depression.

The Mayan Empire is but a memory; its temples and monuments are in ruins, overgrown by tropical vegetation, the haunt of the lizard and the snake; the modern Mayans, scattered and poverty-stricken, work in the fields of Middle America as peons. But their language still survives, is still used as a medium of intercourse by



millions of natives from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec nearly down to Panama, being in that respect unique among American native tongues.

Though Don Rafael had wired for a conveyance to meet me at Dzitsas, none was on hand—I learned later that his telegram was not delivered until some hours after my arrival—but at the station by great good luck was a car belonging to the Carnegie Foundation, and in this I got a lift to the ruins.

The execrable road—I understand that it has since been improved—led across a dreary, sandy plain covered with small, scraggly trees and low tropical vegetation. Now and then we passed small Indian villages—clusters of miserable mud huts with thatched roofs and dusty dooryards fenced with agaves or cactus. Staring at us incuriously were squat, swarthy, black-haired peons, the women in brightly colored garments, the men in pink or green or purple shirts and white cotton drawers, their bare feet shod with rope-soled sandals. These humble tillers of the soil are descendants of the proud and haughty folk who once ruled this land, but they have the features, the complexion, and the physique of Mongolians. Later on I commented on this to Dr. Sylvanus Morley, the eminent archaeologist who is in charge of the excavations.

“Take the driver of the car in which I came out here, for example,” I remarked. “If you saw him anywhere else you would take him for an Oriental.”

“And you would be quite right,” the scientist said dryly. “As it happens, he’s a Korean.”

We had been jolting along for about an hour when the driver touched my elbow.

"Chichen-Itzá," he said laconically, pointing. "El Castillo."

My eyes followed the direction of his finger. Above the bush, perhaps two miles away, rose a great pyramid. But a pyramid the like of which I had never seen before, for it was truncated near the top and crowned by what resembled a small Greek temple. Drenched in the hot sunlight, it seemed to be made of yellowed ivory. I recognized it from pictures I had seen. The Great Temple of Kukulcan.

The car passed through a gate in a barbed-wire fence, passed the buildings of an old hacienda, and drew up before the yellow *Casa Principal* which is the headquarters of the archaeologists working under the auspices of the Carnegie Foundation. The director, Dr. Morley, who is the soul of hospitality, insisted that I take my meals with him, his pretty wife, and the members of the American staff in the casa. The accommodations for visitors to Chichen-Itzá are very limited, consisting of a small hotel, known as Mayaland Lodge, and half a dozen bungalows. These are oval—a form of construction common in Yucatan—with the steeply pitched thatch roofs characteristic of Java. They have tiled floors, bathrooms with white porcelain fittings, the best of beds, and are extremely comfortable.

After lunch, with a young American archaeologist for my guide, I set out to see the ruins. Ten minutes' brisk walking along a narrow trail through the bush brought us to the edge of the great plaza which was the center

of the ancient city. Scattered irregularly about, apparently according to no well defined plan, are numerous temples and monuments, all tremendous in size, all crowded with carvings, all radiantly white in the bright sunshine. But dwarfing all else is the Great Temple of Kukulcan, "the Feathered Serpent," generally and inappropriately referred to as El Castillo, which rears itself a hundred feet or more above the level of the plaza. A massive stairway, flanked by stone balustrades sculptured in the form of serpents, the tails at the top, the plumed heads resting on the ground, climbs steeply to the small square temple on the summit.

I have no intention of entering into a detailed description of Chichen-Itzá. There are many writers who are far better qualified to do that than I am. What impressed me most, next to the beauty and majesty of the buildings themselves, is that enough of the city has been excavated and restored for even one with the most superficial knowledge of Mayan history and art to get a graphic idea of what the place looked like at the height of its glory. Which is more than can be said for certain other famous ruins which I have visited, notably Troy, Palmyra, Nineveh, and Babylon.

Next to the Temple of Kukulcan, the high spots of Chichen-Itzá are the Thousand Columns, a colonnade of stone enclosing a rectangle of more than five acres; the Astronomical Observatory, the High Priest's Tomb, the Temple of the Jaguars, the House of the Dark Writing, and the vast Ball Court, where the Mayans played their national game, called *tlachtli*, which seems to have been a sort of basketball and hockey combined. In addition to

these there are a vast number of terraces, sunken courts, and minor monuments of one kind and another, all covered with carvings. Not only the area now in process of excavation, but an untouched area in the surrounding jungle, is littered with these relics of a lost world.

From the Great Temple a broad stone-paved *allée*, straight as a ruler, leads through a tunnel of tropic vegetation to the larger of the two *cenotes*, or wells, upon which the city depended for its very life and which were indissolubly connected with its religion. The *Cenote del Sacrificio* is, I judged, not less than one hundred feet across, its rocky walls, sheer and smooth, rising a like distance above the surface of the dark and silent water. It is called a well, and that is exactly what it is—but an enormous one, for at its bottom is a small lake. And it was a well of death, for into it, in times of drought, the Mayan priests flung young maidens, the most beautiful in the empire, to appease the Rain God who was believed to dwell in its depths. Clinging to the lip of the *cenote* is the stone platform from which the priests tossed their lovely victims into the abyss, and from the bottom have been dredged their skeletons, still bedecked with jewels.

After dinner at the mess I broke away from my hosts and made my way through the jungle to the great plaza, for I wanted to see the ruins by moonlight and by myself. It was an unforgettable experience. The fantastic structures, which by day seemed to have been carved from old ivory, had been turned to silver by the moon. Climbing the pyramid, I seated myself on the platform at the top and lighted my pipe. Only the distant howl of

some wild animal—a jaguar perhaps—broke the deathly silence. Presently the long-dead city spread below me seemed to come to life. In my mind's eye I could see the glittering sacrificial procession emerge from the door of the temple and begin its slow descent of the pyramid—the priests in their turquoise masks and feathered bonnets; the girlish choristers, their voices raised in the plaintive death-chant; the musicians with their booming drums and conch-shell trumpets; the stocky, brown-skinned warriors, spears aslant; and, at the last, drugged with *balche*, festooned with jewels, garlanded with flowers, the slim brown maiden who was to be the Rain God's bride.

The plane for Havana leaves Mérida at six A.M. and once more I had to get up at an ungodly hour—the last time, thank Heaven, I reminded myself. It was a small ship and I had only two fellow passengers; commercial travelers, I gathered from their conversation, who had been drumming up trade in Mexico. I didn't learn their names, but I mentally christened them Potash and Perlmutter.

It was not good flying weather, and when we came down at Cozumel, the sandy island off the coast of Yucatan where Cortés first landed, the sky was dark with angry clouds.

“Bad storm coming up from the south,” remarked the pilot, “but we'll escape it, though we may run into some rain. Let's get started.”

Messrs. Potash and Perlmutter were all for staying on Cozumel until the storm had passed, but I had too much

confidence in Pan-American pilots to question their judgment. I had flown with them for fifteen thousand miles and had long since discovered that their maxim is "Safety First," that they never take an unnecessary risk.

We caught the tail of the storm, however, off the western extremity of Cuba. The plane bucked and rolled like an untamed broncho; the rain came down in torrents; the visibility was nil. Fortunately, I am subject neither to *mal de mer* nor to *mal d'air*, but Potash and Perlmutter were violently, disgustingly sick. The small cabin, tightly sealed against the rain, was a mess.

Buffeted by the wind, we were late in reaching Havana, though how the pilot knew when we were over the Cuban capital was a mystery, for below us, blotting out the earth, was a blanket of wet gray clouds. The radio man, talking to the airport, reported that the ceiling was zero. But, unfortunately, we were above the ceiling; as it were, on the roof. And we couldn't land until the clouds lifted or the pilot could find a gap. For half an hour we circled above the airport. We knew that it was only a few thousand feet below us, for the radio told us so, but it might as well have been in the South Atlantic. Suddenly, however, came a rift in the cloud-bank and the pilot, bringing the nose of the plane down sharply, dived through it as a circus-rider dives through a paper hoop.

"Great stuff!" I remarked to Potash and Perlmutter as we clambered from the plane. "That pilot certainly knows his business."

"Oi! Oi! Oi!" groaned Mr. Perlmutter, clasping his paunch.

"Where," demanded Mr. Potash, whose complexion had turned a yellow-green, "can I get a drink?"

I have a number of friends in Havana, but, as it turned out, they were all away from home, so that I had to devise an evening's entertainment for myself, as the Miami plane did not leave until the following afternoon.

Instead of dining at the great tourist hostelry where I had taken a room, and which differs in little save point of latitude from similar establishments in the States, I chose the staid old Florida, at the foot of the Calle O'Reilly, which retains more of the old-time Spanish atmosphere than any hotel in Havana. I ordered Daiquirí cocktails and Morro crab and avocado-and-persimmon salad and a native cheese with guava paste. I ate leisurely, so that the evening was well along when I strolled uptown to join the slowly moving throng in the brilliantly lighted Parque Central.

At one of the numerous open-air cafés which encroach upon the sidewalk opposite the Capitol an orchestra of pretty Indian girls in brilliant costumes was playing the vivacious airs the Cubans love. Seating myself at a secluded table, I ordered coffee and a yellow Chartreuse. Then, cigar alight, I settled down to watch unroll the kaleidoscopic panorama of island life.

Few cities in the world have so picturesque and colorful a night life as the capital of Cuba. Nowhere, save perhaps in Stamboul, can one see such a bewildering variety of colors, races, and types. Here were smartly gowned, vivacious Cuban girls with olive-and-rose skins, lustrous eyes, and lovely figures; Cuban dandies in tight-

waisted suits of white linen, twirling their canes and ogling every woman; American tourists from the cruise-ships in the harbor, conspicuous by their shrill voices and boisterous manners; khaki-clad soldiers who were walking arsenals; bold-eyed women of easy virtue, with their low-voiced, insinuating "*Buenas noches, señor*"; American naval police, on their arms the brassards of the Shore Patrol, the swagger and roll of the sea in their gait; bands of strolling musicians, called *charangas*, thrumming beribboned guitars; portly, prosperous-looking business men, animatedly discussing the latest sugar quotations or the latest political developments; importunate street urchins, with their eternal whine of "Mitta! Mitta! Five cen', please"; sleek, agate-eyed gentry whose massive watch-chains and diamond scarf-pins bespoke the gaming-table and the race-track; Negro stevedores, their huge muscles bulging beneath their sweat-soaked cotton shirts; black plantation laborers from Jamaica, speaking English with a Cockney accent; ladies of the old aristocracy, defying fashion with their huge tortoiseshell combs and gossamer lace mantillas; touts for dubious resorts; venders of lottery tickets, obscene postcards, gardenias, peanuts, gimcrack jewelry, carved coconuts, bootlegged American cigarettes; world without end, Amen.

The plane which I boarded the following afternoon at the airport beside Havana harbor was a clipper, as luxurious and almost as spacious as a Pullman car. It even had a smoking compartment. "*All aboard!*" The doors slammed; the machine-gun crackle of the motors rose into a sustained roar; from the pontoons the water

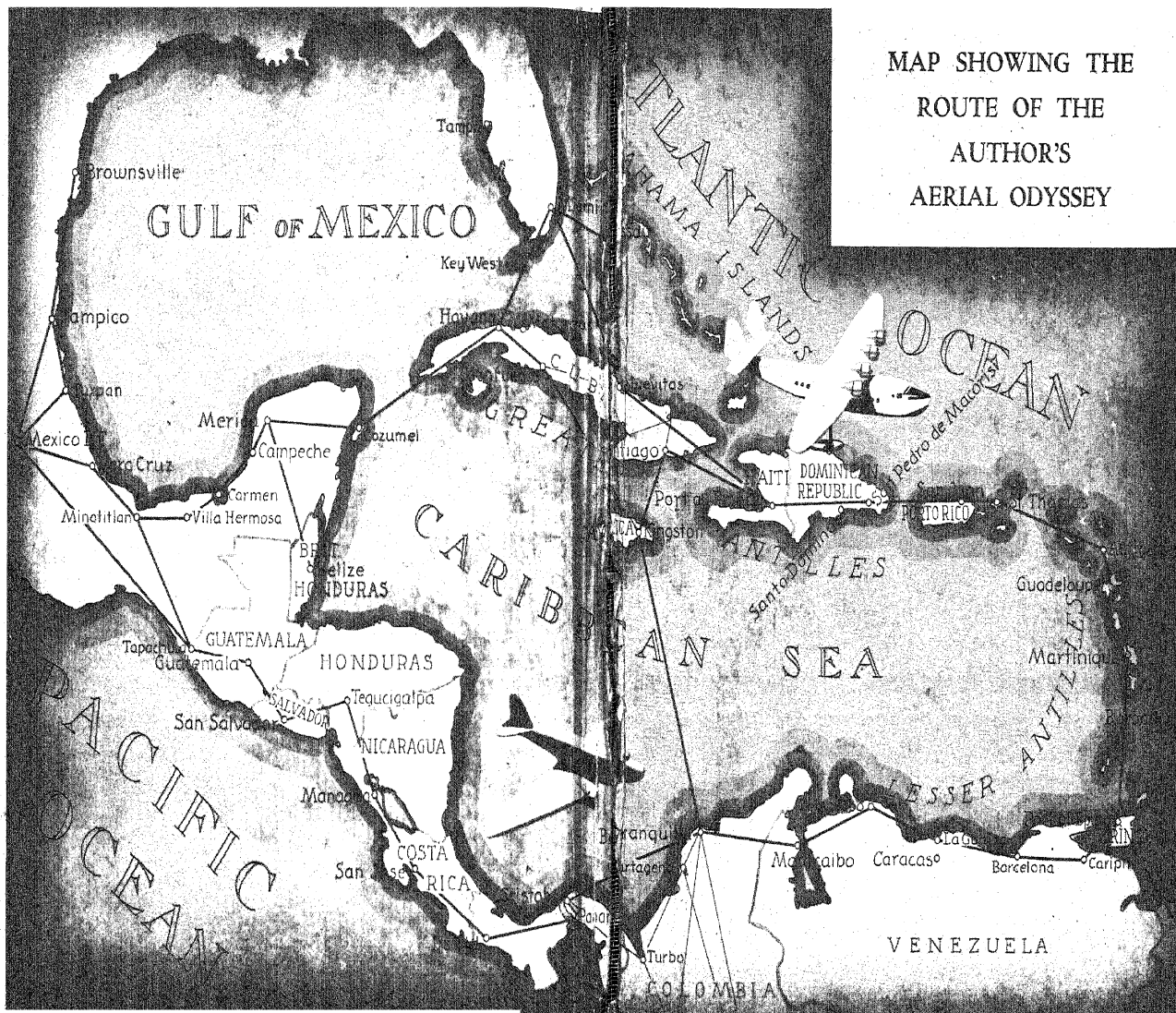


curled in white ostrich-feathers; the shores of the harbor sped past like a motion-picture film which is being run too fast; and below us lay Havana, its towers and domes gleaming in the afternoon sun. To the left, a broad white ribbon bordering the shore-line, stretched the Malecón, transformed by the American Army of Occupation from a city dump to one of the finest sea-front boulevards in the world. To the right, on the summit of a precipitous ridge, crouched La Cabaña, the prison-fortress, a tawny panther drugged to somnolence by the southern sun. Beyond it, to the seaward, on a rocky promontory above the harbor's mouth, stood El Morro—a hard brown fist thrust out, either in friendship or in defiance, toward the Colossus of the North.

Florida stretched out a slender hand to greet us before I had finished the New York paper which I had bought at a Havana news-stand. In the distance the tall white buildings of Miami speared the blue. Miami Beach, Biscayne Bay, Coconut Grove, Dinner Key—and the end of my aerial odyssey.



MAP SHOWING THE  
ROUTE OF THE  
AUTHOR'S  
AERIAL ODYSSEY







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